

Visudyne Therapy

The changes that you have noticed in your vision are due to a disease in the back of the eye called Age-Related Macular Degeneration (ARMD). Without treatment, you will lose most of your central vision over a period of weeks or months, caused by new blood vessels growing at the back of the eye, which leak blood and fluid and cause scarring. This damages the macula, which is the part of the eye that allows sharp, central vision.

A treatment for this condition is now available involving the use of a drug call Visudyne (verteporfin) and a specific type of laser. Visudyne has been extensively tested on patients with your type of ARMD. The results are encouraging and suggest that the loss of vision may be slowed down and, in some cases stopped.

The Procedure:

Visudyne needs to be injected into the blood. When there is enough Visudyne in the eye, it is activated using a specially designed non-thermal laser. For the laser treatment, you will have a drop of local anaesthetic put into your eye and a contact lens is used.

When Visudyne is activated with the laser, it causes damage of the abnormal blood vessels of the ARMD causing them to close. In this way,

further leakage and bleeding is reduced.

After the Procedure:

Visudyne will make you extremely light sensitive for up to 2 days after the injection. If you stay in bright light for too long, you can suffer a serious photosensitive reaction. During this period you will need to stay indoors and you will need to cover up to protect your eyes and skin to prevent sunburn.

For a few hours after the treatment, you will have some blurred vision because of the drops used to prepare your eye for the treatment. You should also wear dark sunglasses to protect your eyes from the light. During this time you must not drive any vehicles or operate machinery.

Because these blood vessels tend to reopen, you will need to come back to have further photos taken of the back of your eye, and whenever the abnormal blood vessels leak again, you will need another treatment. This may happen up to 4 times per year. Many patients have already been on treatment for up to 2 years.

Side-Effects:

If Visudyne leaks out of the blood vessel during the injection, you are likely to experience some pain where the injection is being inserted. In this case, there may be a rash and skin covering the leak will need to be covered for several days to protect it from light.

A small number of patients have experienced back pain and/or felt sick during the injections. These feelings passed once the injection was stopped. Other side-effects of this treatment include decreased vision (if some of the normal blood vessels are shut down as well which can occur in about 1 in 50 people or 2%), bleeding inside the eye, abnormal vision, eye pain and redness. Some of these may also be due to the ARMD itself. Some patients have had one or more of the following side-effects: headache, dizziness and a drop in blood pressure.

If you experience any side-effects please let us know as we are obliged to inform the company and/or Health Authorities.

Conclusion:

You do not have to agree to have the Visudyne therapy and, if you wish, we will continue to monitor your progress as is normal in our clinic. If you try Visudyne therapy, you can also change your mind at any time and cease ongoing treatment.

If you have any other questions about this treatment, please feel free to ask by contacting The Eye Hospital reception on 6334 4960.