

Vitreotomy Surgery – post op instructions

Vitreotomy surgery uses very tiny instruments inside the eye to remove vitreous jelly and to treat conditions such as retinal detachment, macular hole, epi-retinal membranes and vitreous haemorrhage.

Most patients have local anaesthetic for surgery but these instructions also apply if you have had a general anaesthetic.

Comfort

Modern vitrectomy surgery uses tiny incisions that self-seal and is usually quite comfortable immediately after surgery. Occasionally a stitch is needed and this can cause a gritty feeling in the eye for a few days. The eye may look quite red but this should not cause concern and will settle in 1-2 weeks.

Severe pain is unusual and you should seek immediate help if you are concerned.

Eye Drops

You will need to take drops for about 4 weeks after surgery. These contain an antibiotic and an anti inflammatory drug to help the eye settle. Often drops to dilate the pupil are used in the first week. You will have a leaflet from the hospital to explain how and when to use drops.

Gas Bubbles and Posturing

Some patients e.g. after retinal detachment or macular hole repair, require a gas bubble to help seal the breaks in the retina. The gas will slowly absorb over a 2 week to 2 month period and this depends on the type of gas used. While there is a bubble in the eye the vision is often very poor indeed and you should not be alarmed. As the bubble reduces in size the vision will slowly return from the top of the image and you will be aware of the fluid level in the eye acting like a spirit level.

At the outset you may be instructed to posture carefully to help the bubble float in the correct position to support the damaged area of the retina. If instructed to do so this is very important to help the operation succeed and you will need to do this during the first week after surgery. The required position is necessary for about 50 minutes out of every hour with a short break for meals, comfort etc. It is difficult to complete strict posturing and this is only required in certain cases.

Vision

For most vitrectomy procedures there is a period of blurred vision after surgery and the final outcome takes 4-8 weeks to develop. During this time I will check on your progress and keep you updated. There may be a need to alter glasses after this time and I will advise you when this is best for you.

Flying, Driving, Exercise

Patients with a gas bubble must not fly until the bubble has disappeared. Failure to follow this advice can lead to catastrophic vision loss.

Driving should restart once you are confident that you can manage to see clearly enough to meet the driving standard (number plate at 20 yards). From my

experience very few patients with gas bubbles can drive safely and you would be advised to wait until the bubble clears.

For patients who did not require a gas bubble then the time to restart driving and normal exercise is usually within the first fortnight after surgery. I am happy to give advice when I see you for follow up.