

# Macular hole

Information and advice for patients

## Ophthalmic

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### What is macular hole?

Macular hole is a condition affecting patients, more often female, where a tiny hole develops in the very centre of the retina (called the macula) which is responsible for detailed vision. Patients will experience central distortion of vision, then gradual loss of reading vision.

Other causes of macular holes include trauma, in very short-sighted people (people who need distance glasses) or with retinal detachment.

### How is the diagnosis confirmed?

Usually the diagnosis can be made by clinical examination or through an imaging test called OCT (optical coherence tomography) a scan to confirm the condition.

### How can it be treated?

Treatment is by surgery called a pars plana vitrectomy. Three tiny holes are made in the sclera (white of the eye) and the vitreous jelly is removed, together with a very thin membrane (the ILM or inner limiting membrane). A gas (or occasionally oil) bubble is then placed into the eye. The gas bubble is absorbed over 4 to 8 weeks after surgery. An oil bubble requires an additional operation to be removed. Patients may be positioned face down for 7 days, and may require cataract surgery within 6 to 12 months after surgery (unless they have combined cataract surgery at the same time). Patients must not fly or drive while they have a gas bubble in the eye.

### What anaesthetic is required for the surgery?

A Local anaesthetic is the preferred option. It is given by injection around the eyeball and will prevent pain during surgery. A general anaesthetic can be given if preferred, but your general health will determine if you are allowed this option.

## **What is it like to have a gas bubble in the eye?**

The vision is very blurred if there is a gas bubble in the eye, similar to having your eyes open under water. As the gas bubble gets smaller, you will notice its edge as a wobbly line in the upper field of vision. This will then drop downwards in the field of vision until it becomes a round blob in the bottom before disappearing.

## **What happens if the macular hole is not treated?**

The central vision will slowly get worse and reduce your ability to read or recognise faces. The peripheral part of the vision will remain unaffected and the eye will never become totally blind.

## **What are chances of developing a macular hole in the other eye?**

There is a 15% chance of developing a hole in the other eye over 5 years from the onset of the hole in the first eye.

## **What are the risks of having the surgery?**

- Cataract progression
- Retinal detachment
- Raised eye pressure
- Bleeding inside the eye
- Infection
- Blindness or loss of eye (extremely rare)
- Further surgery if the macular hole does not close

## **How do I maintain a face-down position?**

You can maintain this position by lying on the bed with pillows for support. Pillows should be placed under the hips and ankles or special wedges can be purchased if longer periods of positioning are required. You may prefer to sit at a table and use pillows for support. Posturing tables can be rented from internet sites, search for "macular hole posture support".

## **How much time off work will I need?**

Most people will need at least 2 to 4 weeks off work after surgery. This is dependent on the type of work that you do.

## **Will my eye be sore following surgery?**

It is normal to experience some discomfort and red eye after surgery but this usually is relieved with simple painkillers.

## **How soon will I see after surgery?**

Vision in the operated eye will usually be very blurred for the first few weeks but will slowly improve. The final visual result may take several weeks or months and you may require new glasses.

## **How long before I can wash my hair?**

You are able to wash your hair but avoid getting water or shampoo/conditioner into the eyes. To prevent this from happening, face away from the water stream, keep your head tilted back and eyes closed whilst rinsing.

## **When can I wear make-up again following surgery?**

Avoid eye make-up for 2 weeks following surgery.

## **When can I drive after surgery?**

We advise you not to drive for two weeks after the surgery. If gas has been injected in your eye, you will not be able to drive for about six to eight weeks depending on the type of gas. It is best to check with your doctor before you start to drive again.

## **What if something happens after surgery before my follow up appointments?**

If you experience any worsening of your vision, redness or pain after the surgery, please report to our eye casualty service at the Birmingham Midlands Eye Centre for advice.

**Telephone:** 0121 507 6780

**Monday-Friday:** 9am – 7pm

**Saturday:** 9am – 7pm

**Sunday:** 9am – 6pm

At other times, please contact your local A&E department.

## Sources of information

National Health Service (2018) *Maclar hole*. Available at: <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/macular-hole/> (Accessed: 27 November 2019).

If you would like to suggest any amendments or improvements to this leaflet please contact SWB Library Services on ext 3587 or email [swbh.library@nhs.net](mailto:swbh.library@nhs.net).



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