

What is an Intravitreal Injection?

There are now several drugs which are able to be injected into the eye to reduce retinal swelling or bleeding and therefore help improve your vision.

These drugs include:

- Ranibizumab (Lucentis),
- Aflibercept (Eylea),
- Dexamethasone (Ozurdex),
- Bevacizumab (Avastin).

These drugs usually work best if given on an ongoing basis , often monthly which your Ophthalmologist will discuss with you.

The injection is given with a very fine needle through the white part of the eyeball into the jelly part at the back of the eye. By delivering the drug into the eye in this manner , it ensures that it is accurately delivered to the site of the retina with disease to take effect quickly. This procedure is usually carried out as an out-patient visit or as a day-case procedure in theatre.

Why do I need Intravitreal Injections?

common retinal conditions treated in this manner include : the 'wet' form of age-related macular degeneration , diabetic macular oedema (leaky blood vessels in the centre of the eye) and retinal vein occlusion (blocked blood vessels in the retina causing leakiness).

There is a growing body of evidence that suggests that intravitreal injections of the drugs listed above are very effective in the majority of patients to either maintain or improve vision. After the initial series of injections , your treating team will decide upon the best treatment regimen and how frequently you will need the injections.

What are the risks?

Each injection, regardless of the drug injected carries a 1:1000 risk of a complication, which may severely permanently reduce the sight in the eye injected. The most serious risks are

- Infection inside the eye
- Blockage of the main artery to the eye

Other rare complications include:

- Retinal detachment
- Bleeding inside the eye
- Damage to the lens in the eye

These are all treatable but can compromise the vision in that eye.

How do I prepare for the Intravitreal Injection?

It will be useful to bring a friend or family member with you to the procedure on the day.

Before the injection you may continue with your daily activities as normal; this includes continuing with all routine medication and eye drops. You may eat and drink as normal prior to the injection.

You can expect the following :

1. You will have a vision test , and dilating drops and a retinal photo called an OCT Scan performed on both eyes.
2. You will then be transferred to the injection suite where you will receive anaesthetic drops into the eye to numb the eye.
3. The injection is performed with you lying on a couch where the area around your eye will be covered with sterile drapes. As the eye is num you will not feel not pain though you may have a sensation of pressure when the injection is given.
4. Often you will be observed for some time prior to being discharged home.

You may experience a dry , gritty sensation that may be relieved with lubricating/ “dry eye” eye drops can help to make the eye feel more comfortable.

You must not drive after your appointment as you will be having dilating drops in the eye under-going the injection treatment and these drops blur the vision.