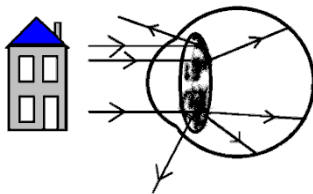


## OPHTHALMOLOGY DEPARTMENT

# Thickening of the posterior capsule & laser treatment

### What is a cataract?

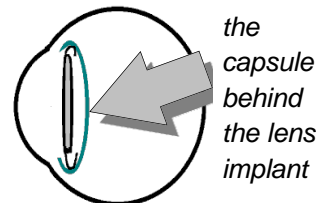
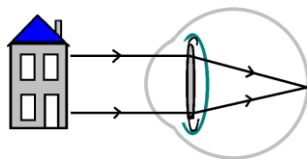
Normally light enters the eye from the front, passes through a clear lens, and reaches the back of the eye so you can see. If the lens becomes cloudy like frosted glass, light cannot pass through, and you cannot see properly. When the lens becomes cloudy, it is called a 'cataract'.



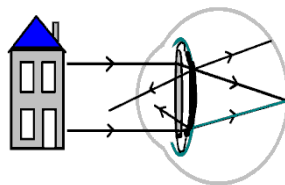
A side view of an eye showing a cataract scattering light

### Cataract surgery

If you have had a cataract operation, a clear plastic lens is placed in the 'bag' left behind when the cataract is removed. The new lens focuses the light onto the back of the eye, just like the original human lens. The 'bag' is called a *capsule*: the capsule supports the implant.



### A thickened posterior capsule



This capsule is normally clear like a glass window. It is very thin, like cellophane. In a small number of patients the capsule thickens up, and becomes a little opaque, like a frosted glass window. This stops the light reaching the back of the eye. If this happens, your sight become misty, and it can become difficult to see at night, or in sunlight. Capsule thickening can happen in the months after your cataract operation, but more commonly occurs two or three years after. Capsule thickening does not damage the eye in any way; it merely makes the sight cloudy.

**After the laser** we sometimes recommend anti-pressure and anti-inflammatory drops for 3 days. These should be stopped if they make you ill. Extra treatment is needed for severe glaucoma. The doctor or nurse will advise on the day.

## Laser treatment

Laser treatment makes a small hole in the centre of the capsule, and can restore your vision to how it was after the cataract operation. The treatment does not hurt, and you hardly notice anything at all. It takes about fifteen minutes; the laser machine is in the outpatient clinic. To carry out the laser, the front of your eye is anaesthetised with an anaesthetic drop, and a small contact lens is placed on your eye. Placing your head on the frame of the laser machine to keep your eye still, the doctor focuses the laser on the capsule. The laser then makes small holes in the capsule, often in a circle. The holes join up and, like tearing a postage stamp, a small hole is made in the capsule. The capsule segment drops to the bottom of the eye (over minutes or hours).

## After the laser

For a few days after the laser you may notice a lot of floaters. The capsule segment drops to the bottom of the eye over a few days, and you may notice large or small floaters at this time; they are normally not troublesome.

## New spectacles

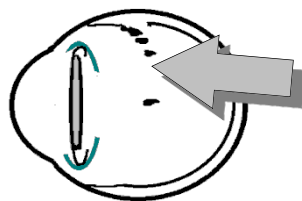
You may need a test for new spectacles. Normally this is best carried out at your own optician's. However, if your sight is bad, ask for an appointment for a test in the eye clinic.

## Are there complications from laser?

The laser is considered very safe, with very few complications. Occasionally a little more laser is needed to release the capsule on a second occasion. Only a small hole in the capsule is needed, so the lens implant still has enough support. Less often, the laser can disturb the retina, the film lining the back of the eye. For instance, very rarely a little fluid can build up in the retina. In addition, the retina may rarely develop a tiny tear months - years later. If this happens you may notice:

- flashes of light during the daytime
- floaters in your vision (it is normal to have these in the weeks after the laser)
- a 'curtain' drifting across your vision (if the tear extends into a retinal detachment)

If you notice a lot of flashes and floaters all of a sudden, you need to have your eye examined to check if there is a small tear in the retina.



*the retina of the eye may be VERY OCCASIONALLY affected by the laser causing floaters (see text)*

If a 'curtain' or 'shutter' drifts across your vision, you need to see an ophthalmologist the same day (this usually means telephoning triage at the REI on 01305 255192). As a precaution you should test your sight every day by covering one eye and checking your sight in the other eye (the eye that has had the laser).



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