

Patient Information

Bleb Needling

Why am I having this treatment?

We consider bleb needling if a glaucoma operation (trabeculectomy) has stopped working properly. When the surgeon does a trabeculectomy, a little hole is made in the white of the eyeball, to allow the fluid to drain out of the eye. This should result in a slight bulge of the coverings of the white of the eye, in the area covered by the upper eyelid- this is called a 'bleb'.

Improving the drainage should reduce the pressure in the eye. Sometimes, the hole will become blocked with scar tissue, and this means that the fluid cannot drain out and the pressure will then go up again. If this happens, it is usually possible to do a simple procedure called 'bleb needling'. If this works, then it should reduce the pressure in the eye again.

Sometimes, bleb needling needs to be done during the first few weeks or months after a trabeculectomy. Most glaucoma surgeons consider this needling to be a standard step in the management of glaucoma patients who have had a trabeculectomy. Depending on the clinical situation, it may be better to do the needling during an outpatient clinic visit, or as a day-case procedure in the operating room.

Does it work?

Bleb needling can often be highly successful in re-opening the trabeculectomy, thus lowering the eye pressure for good long-term control. Factors such as the time period after the initial trabeculectomy and the degree of scarring may affect the outcome.

What are the risks?

Bleb needling is generally considered a safe outpatient procedure. Most patients report only minimal discomfort during the procedure. Your eye may be sore for the next few days. Immediately after the procedure, your eyesight is usually not very clear.

However, your eyesight usually recovers over the days and weeks that follow. Rarely, the needling treatment can make the pressure in your eye very low permanently. This can make your eyesight worse than before the needling treatment. There is also a very small risk (less than 1 case in every 1000 procedures) of infection or severe bleeding which may reduce your eyesight long-term.

Of course, if you do not have this procedure there is a risk that your eyesight could be permanently lost because of glaucoma damage, if the eye pressure remains too high. This is why your doctor has recommended bleb needling for your eye.

Before you have a needling:

If you are taking regular blood-thinning medicine (e.g. aspirin, clopidogrel, warfarin, dipyridamole, dabigatran, etc), or if you are taking regular ginkgo biloba, please tell us now.

We may ask you to reduce or stop the medicine for a few days around the time of the needling, or we may decide on a different treatment.

You will not be able to drive yourself home after a needling.

What should I do after my bleb needling?

- You may have some discomfort when you get home. This may last a few hours or a few days. If you feel that you need painkillers, paracetamol should be sufficient.
- Do not take Aspirin or Ibuprofen, as this can cause bleeding.
- Rest on the day of your operation.
- You may be sent home with a shield on your eye. If so, please leave this in position until the following morning and then wear it each night when you go to bed until your next appointment.
- Please also take the following precautions: Do not bend forward or lift any heavy objects for at least 1 week. Try to keep your eye above your heart:
- We recommend that you sleep with 2 or 3 pillows.
- The nurse will provide you with the eye-drops you will need following your Bleb needling.
- We may check your eye again 1 day to 2 weeks after a needling procedure.
- The eye may feel gritty.
- Do not touch or rub your eye, splash water in your eye, wear eye make-up or go swimming for at least 4 weeks due to the risk of infection.
- You will be required to return for checks at the eye clinic.
- It is important to keep your outpatients/clinic appointments. Please ring 01603 646247 if you have any problems with this.

Serious problems after needling are very rare. If you get any of the following symptoms, we will need to see you **urgently**:

- excessive pain
- loss of vision
- increasing redness of the eye
- Discharge or swelling of the eyelids.

If this occurs, please ring:

Non urgent / advice only 01603 288632

Eye Emergency 01603 287787

Monday to Friday 08:30 to 17:30

Saturday 08:30 to 17:00

Sunday 08:30 to 12:30

At all other times please ring 01603 286286 and ask the Operator to contact the OPTHALMIC (EYE) DOCTOR ON-CALL.

