

Ophthalmology department

Cryotherapy for retinal tear

What is cryotherapy?

Cryotherapy or cryopexy is a means of freezing the retina where a retinal tear has occurred. It is a procedure that uses intense cold to induce a retinal scar around the tear. The scar acts as a kind of glue to heal the tear in the retina. It then takes around 10 to 14 days to heal.

Early detection of retinal tears is crucial to the success rate of the procedure. If left untreated, a retinal detachment may occur.

What is the retina?

The retina is a very thin membrane (a thin layer of nerve tissue) in the back of the eye that acts like a film in a camera.

When you look at an object, light rays pass into your eye through the cornea and lens to the retina at the back of the eye. Cells in the retina send this information via the optic nerve to the brain. Your brain interprets the image you see. If a tear occurs in the retina, it can cause partial or total loss of vision.

What should happen during the procedure?

Usually the procedure is carried out under a local anaesthetic. Eye drops will be instilled to numb the eye. A cryo probe is placed on the outside of the eye over the area of the tear. The probe is turned on and a small area is frozen in a few seconds. Several areas will need to be frozen to seal the tear. You may notice a cold feeling while this happens. It usually takes no longer than 10 minutes to complete the procedure.

What to look out for after the procedure

The vision may be blurred for several days and the eye may look red for a few weeks. Some people get a cold feeling during or after the treatment or experience a 'freezing' headache.

If you need painkillers, a mild one should be sufficient. You can continue with your normal daily activities.

Following cryotherapy, if you experience a black curtain in your field of vision, complete loss of vision, or increase in spots/floaters, strands or cobwebs, please ring: **Nelson Day Unit – 01603 288038 Monday - Friday 08.00 till 18.00**

At all other times, please ring 01603 286286 and ask the switchboard to contact the OPHTHALMIC (EYE) DOCTOR ON CALL

