

Ophthalmology department

Chronic open angle glaucoma (COAG)

Information for patients, relatives and carers

Introduction

This leaflet has been designed to give you information about chronic open angle glaucoma (COAG) and answer some of the questions that you or those who care for you may have. It is not meant to replace the discussion between you and your medical team but aims to help you understand more about what is discussed. If you have any questions about the information below, please contact us.

What is chronic open angle glaucoma?

Glaucoma is the most common cause of irreversible sight loss in the world. It is most often a result of fluid building up in the front part of the eye which increases pressure inside the eye causing damage to the optic nerve. This can then lead to complete and irreversible loss of vision if not properly diagnosed and treated early, or if subsequent treatment advice is not followed.

What can be done about glaucoma?

Glaucoma can be treated effectively in most cases. Treatment aims to reduce the pressure in the eye with drops, laser treatment or surgery.

There are several types of treatment for glaucoma, and you will be told which is the most suitable for you. It is essential that you follow your recommended treatment so that the pressure in your eyes can be reduced. This will help to prevent your eyesight getting worse.

What you should know about the drops

The drops are designed to reduce the pressure in the eye. You may be asked to use them once, twice, or more times a day. It is essential that you follow the instructions you have been given.

Try and keep your drops in a place you are likely to remember them.

How to take the drops

Take drops about the same time daily. For example, if twice a day, put drops into your eyes at 8am and 8pm.

Wash your hands before using the drops.

It is best to put them in by tipping your head back or when lying down. It is more comfortable if you aim for the corner of the eye. If you have difficulty, ask someone to help you – don't go without them.

Keep taking the drops

Each bottle of drops stays fresh for about a month. After four weeks change to a new bottle.

If you do not have a replacement bottle, do not stop using the drops even if they have been opened for over the 4 weeks. Continue using the slightly out-of-date bottle and obtain a fresh supply as soon as possible or consult your doctor.

If you spill your drops, do not wait until your next visit to the eye hospital to get a fresh supply. Contact your GP immediately for a replacement.

How to store the drops

Like all medicines, the drops should be kept out of the reach of children. They should not be left in strong sunlight, or in a very warm place, for example near a fire or a radiator. When you are away from home you can keep the bottle in your pocket or your handbag.

Can glaucoma be cured?

Glaucoma is a chronic disease. This means that in general it cannot be cured, but it can usually be controlled. If you follow the treatment that we recommend, then there is every possibility that your eyesight will not be affected. You are at higher risk of your eyesight becoming worse if you do not take your medicine or do not attend your clinic appointments.

If you have any queries about your treatment which are not covered in this leaflet, please ask any member of the medical staff.

Who you can contact for more information

- Emergency department at Western Eye Hospital – 020 3312 3245
- Outpatients at Western Eye Hospital – 020 3312 3236
- Outpatients at Charing Cross Hospital – 020 3311 1109/ 1233/ 0137

How do I make a comment about my visit?

We aim to provide the best possible service and staff will be happy to answer any of the questions you may have. If you have any **suggestions** or **comments** about your visit, please either speak to a member of staff or contact the patient advice and liaison service (**PALS**) on **020 3313 0088** (Charing Cross, Hammersmith and Queen Charlotte's & Chelsea hospitals), or **020 3312 7777** (St Mary's and Western Eye hospitals). You can also email PALS at imperial.pals@nhs.net The PALS team will listen to your concerns, suggestions or queries and is often able to help solve problems on your behalf.

Alternatively, you may wish to complain by contacting our complaints department:

Complaints department, fourth floor, Salton House, St Mary's Hospital, Praed Street
London W2 1NY

Email: ICHC-tr.Complaints@nhs.net

Telephone: **020 3312 1337 / 1349**

Alternative formats

This leaflet can be provided on request in large print or easy read, as a sound recording, in Braille or in alternative languages. Please email the communications team:
imperial.communications@nhs.net

Wi-fi

Wi-fi is available at our Trust. For more information visit our website: www.imperial.nhs.uk

Ophthalmology department
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