

Ophthalmology

Intravitreal injections

Information for patients, relatives and carers

Introduction

This leaflet will give you information about **intravitreal injections**. We hope it answers some of the questions you or those who care for you have. If you have any questions about the information below, please contact us. Use the details at the end of this leaflet.

What is an intravitreal injection?

An intravitreal injection gives medication directly into the jelly-like substance inside the eye, which is called the vitreous. We use a very fine needle, through the white part of the eye (the sclera).

Why do I need this treatment?

Some eye conditions cause abnormal blood vessels or leaking fluid at the back of the eye. If untreated, these changes can damage your vision. Common conditions that we treat with intravitreal injections include:

- wet age-related macular degeneration (AMD)
- diabetic macular oedema
- retinal vein occlusion
- other causes of leaking fluid under or in the retina

The medicines we inject aim to reduce leaking fluid and help preserve your vision. These medicines include:

- anti-vascular endothelial growth factor drugs (anti-VEGF), such as Eylea®, Vabysmo™
- steroid implants, such as Ozurdex®

How many injections will I need?

Most patients need a course of injections over several months. In some cases, we'll need to continue treatment long-term. It's unusual for one injection to be enough to treat your condition.

Your doctor will explain your individual treatment plan. You'll have regular eye scans and clinic visits so your doctor can see your response to the treatment.

Who will do the injection?

A trained eye nurse or an eye doctor (specialist ophthalmologist) will do your injections.

What happens during the procedure?

- the nurse or doctor will put numbing (anaesthetic) drops into your eye, so you will not feel pain from the injection
- they will clean your eye and surrounding area with antiseptic
- the nurse or doctor might put a special sterile drape over your eye
- they might also use a small instrument (speculum) hold your eyelids open
- they'll give the injection with a very fine needle, and most patients feel only slight pressure
- the whole procedure takes under 15 minutes and the injection itself only lasts a few seconds

What is the aftercare?

- do not rub or touch your eye for at least 24 hours
- do not swim for a few days,
- do not use eye make-up or contact lenses for a few days
- you can continue to use any usual eye drops unless your nurse or doctor tells you not to

After the injection

- you might have blurred vision (especially if we used drops used) this usually improves within a few hours
- floaters, bubbles, or small dark spots might appear in your vision – these usually settle in a few days
- your eye might look red due to a small bleed, and may feel gritty or mildly achy
- we can give you lubricating eye drops for comfort – you won't usually need antibiotic eye drops

Are there any severe infections that I should be worried about?

Although rare, endophthalmitis (infection to the eye) can happen. Endophthalmitis is a severe infection inside the eye. Data from the Western Eye Hospital shows that about 1 in every 3,000 injections can develop endophthalmitis. If it happens, we need to give you urgent treatment to protect your sight. You need to ring **020 3312 3245** (emergency department at Western Eye Hospital) to get urgent help if you notice:

- severe or worsening eye pain
- sudden or rapid loss of vision
- a “curtain” or veil over vision, or new large floaters
- light sensitivity or discharge from your eye

Who can I contact for more information?

- emergency department at Western Eye Hospital: 020 3312 3245
- outpatients at Western Eye Hospital: 020 3312 3236
- Alex Cross ward day care unit: 020 3312 3218 / 9614
- outpatients at Charing Cross Hospital: 020 3311 1109 / 1233 / 0137

How do I give feedback?

We want to hear your **suggestions** or **comments**. Your feedback helps us provide the best service. You can always speak to a member of staff.

You can also contact the **patient advice and liaison service (PALS)** on **020 3312 7777** (10.00 to 16.00, Monday to Friday excluding bank holidays) or email at imperial.pals@nhs.net. The PALS team will listen to your concerns, suggestions or questions and they can help solve problems.

You can make a complaint by ringing **020 3312 1337 / 1349** or emailing tr.Complaints@nhs.net. The address is Complaints department, fourth floor, Salton House, St Mary's Hospital, Praed Street, London W2 1NY.

Other ways to read this leaflet

Please email us at imperial.communications@nhs.net if you need this leaflet in a different format. This could be large print, Easy read, as a sound recording, in Braille or in a different language.