Laser Trabeculoplasty

What is laser trabeculoplasty?

Laser trabeculoplasty is a type of eye surgery that treats open-angle glaucoma.

With glaucoma, aqueous humor does not drain properly from the front of the eye. Pressure builds in the eye, which damages the optic nerve. If it is not treated, glaucoma leads to blindness. Laser trabeculoplasty helps fluid drain properly again, lowering your eye pressure.

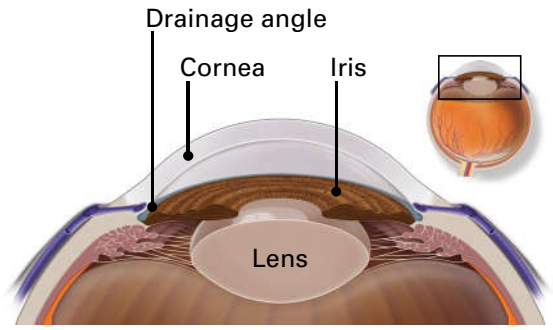
No treatment can fix damage already done to the optic nerve. But laser trabeculoplasty can help prevent further damage from glaucoma.

How is laser trabeculoplasty performed?

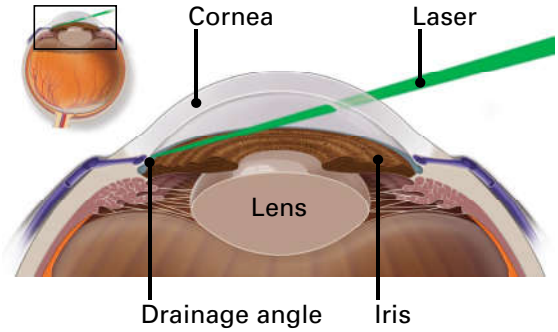
Laser trabeculoplasty is done in an outpatient surgery center or your ophthalmologist's office. Your eye surgeon uses laser energy to treat your drainage angle. This makes the drainage angle work better over time, helping to lower eye pressure.

Laser trabeculoplasty usually takes less than 10 minutes. Here is what happens:

- Your eye will be numbed with eye drops.
- Your ophthalmologist will place a special contact lens on your eye. This serves as a guide for the laser.
- Your ophthalmologist will treat the drainage angle using the laser. You may feel a stinging sensation as the laser is used.



In open-angle glaucoma, fluid does not flow out of the eye as well as it should through the drainage angle.



A laser treats the trabecular meshwork so that fluid flows out of the eye as it should through the drainage angle.

Eye Words to Know

Optic nerve: A nerve at the back of your eye that connects to your brain. The optic nerve sends light signals to your brain so you can see.

Aqueous humor ("aqueous"): Clear liquid inside the front part of our eyes. It nourishes the eye and keeps it inflated. (Aqueous is different from tears, which are outside the eye.)

Drainage angle: The area of the eye where the aqueous humor drains from the front of the eye.

- After the procedure, your vision may be blurry for a couple of hours. Plan to have someone drive you home after the surgery.
- Your ophthalmologist may prescribe medicine that you need to take for a few days after laser trabeculoplasty.

It can take from about 6–8 weeks for laser trabeculoplasty to fully lower your eye pressure. Three months after this surgery, if your pressure is still too high, you may need more treatment. Your ophthalmologist might recommend another laser surgery, more eye-drop medication or another type of eye surgery.

What are the risks of laser trabeculoplasty?

Like any surgery, laser trabeculoplasty carries risks. Fortunately, problems or complications are uncommon. Here are some of those risks.

- The surgery does not lower your eye pressure enough.
- Your eye pressure increases, possibly requiring medicine or surgery to lower it.
- Your eye becomes red, swollen or painful.
- Your vision gets blurry.
- There is damage to other parts of your eye from the laser.
- You need to have laser trabeculoplasty again.

Your ophthalmologist will talk with you about the risks and benefits of laser trabeculoplasty.

Summary

Laser trabeculoplasty is a type of surgery to treat open-angle glaucoma. This surgery helps lower your eye pressure by allowing fluid to drain properly from the front of the eye.

If you have glaucoma, it is important to see your ophthalmologist regularly to check for any eye and vision changes.

If you have any questions about your eyes or your vision, speak with your ophthalmologist. He or she is committed to protecting your sight.

Watch a trabeculoplasty video from the American Academy of Ophthalmology's EyeSmart program at **aao.org/trabeculoplasty-link**.

COMPLIMENTS OF:

BRYAN VEKOVIUS, M.D.

NEURO-OPHTHALMOLOGY AND OCULOPLASTIC SURGERY

450 ASHLEY RIDGE BLVD.
SHREVEPORT, LA 71106

(318) 675-3733

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