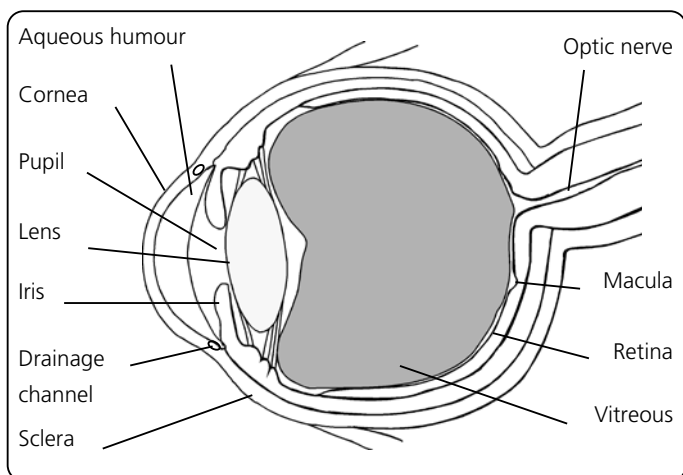


Trabeculectomy

What is a Trabeculectomy?

It is an operation to treat glaucoma.



Glaucoma is an eye condition which causes gradual loss of vision due to damage of the optic nerve at the back of the eye. Usually this happens because of a raised pressure within the eye. Reducing the pressure is the only proven method of controlling glaucoma. Normally daily eye drop treatment is effective but sometimes laser treatment or an operation (trabeculectomy) is needed.

The purpose of the operation is to prevent further damage to the optic nerve at the back of the eye. A drainage channel is made to allow the fluid in the front part of the eye (aqueous humour) to bypass the normal channels which are not working properly.

The fluid passes through a small incision in the upper part of the thick white coat of the eye (the sclera). It can be seen as a small whitish swelling underneath the upper eyelid (known as 'a bleb'). The fluid is then absorbed and returns to the bloodstream.

Success rate:

It is an operation which aims to save the remaining sight in the eye.

Over the first 1- 2 years following surgery approximately 80% of people will have good eye pressure without additional drops. The success rate decreases with time following the surgery with an increasing proportion of people needing to restart glaucoma drops or undergo further surgery in order to control their eye pressure. Some people are at higher risk of having a complication or the surgery failing compared to others. If you are in this group you will be informed by the glaucoma clinic staff.

Risks

- **Decreased vision:** vision is reduced in all patients immediately following surgery. In most patients the vision will return to normal within three months, although this may require a change in glasses. A small proportion of patients feel their vision is permanently impaired following trabeculectomy surgery. This is usually mild but can be severe, especially in patients who have very advanced glaucoma. The risk of visual impairment following trabeculectomy surgery must be balanced against the risk of visual loss from glaucoma.
- **Bleeding within the eye:** there is a small risk of bleeding in the eye at the time of the operation. If this happens it will gradually clear.

- **Excessive drainage of fluid:** there is also a small risk of over drainage of fluid which could make the pressure too low. This usually settles but may need further treatment or an operation.
- **Infection in the eye:** this is very rare but may cause permanent loss of vision.
- **Excessive pressure in the eye:** this is rare after the operation but may occur due to poor drainage of the fluid or through an abnormal flow of fluid.

Later after the operation:

- There is an increased risk of a cataract forming after trabeculectomy. Up to 50% of patients will develop worsening vision due to cataract. If the cataract is severe enough, further surgery may be required to improve the vision.
- **Scar formation:** your body may heal too well and this may cause a scar to form over the drainage site ('bleb'). This will cause the operation to fail and the pressure will rise again within the eye. Anti-scarring medication Mitomycin C (MMC) will be used during the operation to reduce this risk.
- **Infection:** the drainage 'bleb' increases the risk of infection within the eye. If you develop a red, painful eye please contact the Eye Unit (see page 8).
- **Droopy eyelid:** a slight droop of the upper eyelid is common.

Before the Operation

You will be asked to attend a pre-operative assessment clinic to discuss your general health and to make sure you have all the information you need about the operation.

Patients who are taking a tablet to thin the blood such as warfarin, clopidogrel or aspirin are given special instructions before the operation, so it is important that you bring all your tablets with you in their original boxes.

The Day of the Operation

You will be asked to arrive at our Day Case Unit at either 8am for morning operations or 12.45pm for afternoon operations. You will be in our Unit for about 4-5 hours.

After the Operation

For the night following the operation we would recommend having someone either at home or available quickly should you need additional support. It is important to rest in the few days after the operation. You will need to be reviewed in the Glaucoma Clinic at heavitree Hospital the day after the operation, and we would recommend arranging transport in advance. At the end of the trabeculectomy operation the surgeon sutures the new drainage channel in order to reduce the chances of the pressure being too low afterwards. In the weeks following the surgery if the pressure is higher than ideal we will remove or apply laser to the sutures in order to improve the drainage of fluid. In addition, some people require injections of additional anti healing medicine to the site of surgery. These procedures are done in the outpatient clinic and are why it is necessary to have fairly frequent visits in the few months following surgery.

The vision will be blurred after the operation. This may take several weeks to settle. The eye may also be sore, watery and gritty for a few days after the operation. A pain-killing tablet such as paracetamol should help to keep the eye comfortable. Please do not take aspirin as a painkiller on the day of your operation as it can increase the risk of bleeding in your eye.

Please avoid heavy lifting, gardening and active sports for at least four weeks after the operation. Your eye doctor will advise you about driving and answer any other questions you may have.

We hope this leaflet has been helpful. If you have any comments about the leaflet or questions about the operation please ask our staff.

How to get help following surgery

Normal working hours

Glaucoma Unit on 01392-406045
(Monday - Friday 9am to 5pm)

Or

Call our Eye Triage Team 01392 404955
(Monday-Saturday 9am to 5pm)

Outside of normal eye department working hours

Please call 111 for emergencies and urgent queries only

Useful contacts

Glaucoma UK is a charity which aims to provide help, information and support for people with glaucoma.

Their website (glaucoma.uk) contains information on glaucoma surgery

You can call their helpline on 01233 64 81 70 or email helpline@glaucoma.uk

The Trust cannot accept any responsibility for the accuracy of the information given if the leaflet is not used by Royal Devon staff undertaking procedures at the Royal Devon hospitals.

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