

## Vitrectomy (surgery to remove vitreous jelly from eye)

---

This leaflet gives you advice and information about vitrectomy. If you have any questions or concerns, please speak to your eye specialist or nurse.

---

Your eye specialist has advised you to have a vitrectomy – surgery to remove the clear jelly from inside the eye. The clear jelly is called vitreous humour and gives the eye shape.

### Why do I need a vitrectomy?

- It may be part of another operation, e.g. you may need retinal surgery therefore the jelly is removed so that the surgeon can access the retina.
- You may have a diabetic eye condition leading to cloudy vitreous humour and reduced vision.
- You may have had a trauma to the eye and may need to have a foreign body removed.
- You may need a biopsy (sample of tissue sent for testing) in order to diagnose a serious eye infection.

### How is the vitrectomy carried out?

The operation is usually done under a general anaesthetic (you are asleep) although some people are suitable for a local anaesthetic (you are awake but the area is numbed). The anaesthetic will depend on the type of operation you need and your individual health.

The surgeon will make tiny cuts in sclera (white of your eye) and remove the vitreous jelly from inside. The operation usually takes between 1 and 2 hours. Once the jelly is removed, the surgeon can then carry out any other procedure necessary to treat your condition.

Usually, no stitches are needed afterwards. However if they are, the stitches are dissolvable so don't need removing.

## What happens next?

The eye will eventually produce a clear liquid called aqueous humour that will fill the space where the vitreous jelly used to be, but in the meantime something else needs to be inserted in order to keep the eyeball in shape, including:

- A gas bubble (that is naturally absorbed in 2-8 weeks).
- A special oil or heavy liquid which is not absorbed and is surgically removed at a future date.
- Air (absorbed in 24-36 hours).
- A mixture of gas and air.

## What is the risk of complications?

There is a 5-10% risk of needing further surgery after a vitrectomy. The risk of developing a cataract is approximately 30-40%. Because of the risk of cataracts developing, patients undergoing vitrectomy are measured for lens implants at their pre-operative assessment appointments so that cataract surgery can be carried out at a future date. The possibility and timing of this secondary operation will be discussed with you before your vitrectomy.

## Your operation

You will be given a folder called 'Coming into hospital for eye surgery' at your pre-operative assessment which will help you prepare for your operation and will give you instructions on fasting. Vitrectomy operations are usually carried out as 'day cases' – you come in and go home on the same day – but sometimes an overnight stay is necessary.

## After your operation

- Your vision may be blurred for several weeks and the level of your vision may not be stabilised until 4-6 weeks post-op.
- Your eye will probably be sensitive, swollen and red following surgery. This takes a few weeks to improve.
- You will be given eye drops to use at home. These will help prevent infection, reduce inflammation and aid healing.
- If gas or oil has been used, you may be advised to 'posture' after surgery to make sure that the gas/oil stays in the right area. You will usually need to do this for five days for 50 minutes every hour during the day. At night you

will be advised to sleep in a certain position – either face down or on your side.

- Your nurse will explain this in more detail to you and will give you a leaflet on ‘posturing’.
- You will be given a follow up appointment 1-2 weeks following your surgery. Further appointments will normally be necessary, particularly if you develop cataracts.

### Signs to look out for after your operation

- Increasing pain, redness and swelling, light sensitivity and coloured discharge from the eye.
- Worsening of your vision.

If you experience either of these symptoms, please attend the Eye Casualty department.

Eye Casualty (Reading):	Mon-Fri 9am to 5pm; Sat & Sun & bank holidays 9am-12.30pm; Closed Christmas Day and New Year’s Day.
Eye Casualty: Prince Charles Eye Unit (Windsor):	Mon-Fri 9am to 5pm; Sat 9am-12.30pm; Closed Sun & bank holidays.
Dorrell Ward (Reading):	0118 322 7172 (24 hours a day)
Eye Day Unit (Reading):	0118 322 7123 (Mon-Fri 7am to 6pm)

Outside of Eye Casualty hours you should telephone your GP’s out of hours service, ring NHS 111 or if you have serious concerns, visit your nearest Emergency Department (A&E).

Visit the Trust website at [www.royalberkshire.nhs.uk](http://www.royalberkshire.nhs.uk)

This document can be made available in other languages and formats upon request.

Eye Day Unit, February 2019. Review due: February 2021