

INFORMATION FOR PATIENTS

Anti-VEGF injection treatment

You have been given this factsheet because your doctor has recommended anti-VEGF treatment (injections) for your eye condition.

VEGF stands for Vascular Endothelial Growth Factor. It is one of the chemicals involved in growing new blood vessels in the eye.

Anti-VEGF treatment is used to treat conditions that cause unstable, abnormal blood vessels to grow and leak under the retina (the layer of cells at the back of the eye) which could lead to a rapid loss of central vision.

These conditions include:

- Wet age-related macular degeneration
- Diabetic macular oedema
- Retinal vein occlusion.

What does the treatment involve?

A series of injections of Anti-VEGF medicines are given into your eye to stop the blood vessels leaking blood or fluid, helping to prevent damage to the back of the eye and the loss of central vision.

What are the benefits?

The eye injections give us the best chance of stabilising the eye condition, so that your vision is less likely to get worse. In some cases, this treatment can improve the vision.

What if I don't have the treatment?

If you decide not to have the treatment, your decision will be respected. It is likely that without treatment the vision will get worse over time and may not be recoverable at all.

What happens during the injection?

You will be asked to sign a form to consent to the treatment before the course.

The procedure takes 10 to 15 minutes but the injection itself is over in less than ten seconds.

The injection takes place in a designated treatment room. You will be asked to lie down on a couch and the eyelids and surface of the eye will be cleaned to prevent infection. A drape will be placed over the eye, and a small clip will be inserted to keep the eye open and stop blinking. Anaesthetic drops are put into the eye to numb the surface before the injection so there shouldn't be a lot of discomfort. The injection site is marked, and the drug is injected into the white part of the eye using a very fine needle. An antibiotic drop is also put in. You will be asked to keep very still at this point. You may feel a bit of pressure/pushing but no pain.

Your vision will be checked after the injection by counting the number of fingers being held up.

Who will give the injection?

It will be performed by either a specialist eye doctor or a specialist nurse.

We do not guarantee that a particular person will perform the procedure. The person, however, will have the appropriate experience and training.

What happens after the treatment?

You may go home immediately after the injection. You will be advised not to rub the eye for the rest of the day as it will still be anaesthetised, and you may cause a scratch to the surface of the eye. Try to rest, if possible, with the eyes closed for a short time.

If your eye feels gritty after the injection, then lubricating or dry eye drops can be purchased from your local pharmacy to help to make the eye more comfortable. A new bottle should be opened after each injection to minimise the risk of infection in the eye.

A letter will be sent to your GP after every treatment.

How many injections will I need?

An initial course of three injections will be given and then the condition will be reviewed at frequent intervals. This involves vision testing, pupil dilation, imaging and assessment. The doctor will advise if further treatment is indicated, for which you may have to return on another day. The majority of patients do require further treatment and are treated for a number of years.

You may not see a doctor on every visit as many clinics now are virtual (please see separate leaflet if this applies to you).

It is important that you keep any eye clinic appointments that you are asked to attend in order to obtain the maximum benefit from treatment.

What are the risks of the treatment?

As with any medical procedure, there are risks of complications following treatment (see below). These will be discussed with you by the doctor or nurse prior to treatment. For most patients the benefits will outweigh the risks.

Very rare (1 in 1000 cases):

- Serious eye infection
- Serious inflammation inside the eye
- Blindness / complete loss of vision.

Rare (1 in 100 cases):

- Detached retina
- Blood clots and bleeding in the eye
- Cataract.

Uncommon:

- Corneal abrasion (scratch on the surface of the eye)
- Increase in eye pressure.

Significant loss of vision due to this treatment is very uncommon.

There is an associated risk of anti-VEGF treatment and stroke and heart attack. Please inform the doctor or nurse doing the injection if you suffered a stroke or heart attack within the three months before treatment.

Common side effects:

- Red eye – caused by a bleed on the white part of the eye where the injection was given (1 in 10 cases) this does not affect the vision and will resolve within a week.
- Occasionally, small air bubbles enter the eye at the time of the injection, creating black spots (floaters) which move around. These are nothing to worry about and will disappear within 24 to 48 hours.
- Sore and gritty eye, which may last 1 to 2 days. This can be relieved with lubricating drops from your local pharmacy.
- There could also be flashing lights or swirls of light immediately after the injection.

Is there anyone who should not have this treatment?

Please inform us if any of the following apply to you:

- An infection in either eye.
- Infection anywhere in the body.
- Currently taking antibiotics.
- You are allergic to Anti-VEGF or any of its ingredients.
- You have recently been fitted with a pacemaker and have not yet been reviewed by your cardiologist.
- Have had a heart attack or stroke within the last 3 months.
- Women who are trying to become pregnant, are already pregnant or are breastfeeding.
- Any recent changes in your medical condition.

Other information

Before the injection you may continue with your daily activities as normal. Continue taking any prescribed medication and eye drops. You may eat and drink as normal before the injection.

We advise that you do not drive following an injection as your vision may be affected.

It is recommended to not plan holidays abroad within 48 hours of eye injection when feasible. If this is not feasible and you happen to travel abroad, you should avoid getting water into the eye or swimming for at least 48 hours after the injection. If you experience any problems while you are away, please see a local ophthalmologist.

You might notice some discomfort and redness of the eye for the first few days after the injection; this is perfectly normal.

You can take your usual pain relief medications to help with any discomfort you may experience.

If your eye becomes progressively red, sensitive to light, swollen and painful or your vision gets worse please contact the eye clinic at King's Mill Hospital on 01623 622515, extension 6654.

If you have any problems on weekends or out of clinic hours, please attend your nearest Emergency Department.

Further sources of information

NHS Choices: www.nhs.uk/conditions

Our website: www.sfh-tr.nhs.uk

Patient Experience Team (PET)

PET is available to help with any of your compliments, concerns or complaints, and will ensure a prompt and efficient service.

King's Mill Hospital: 01623 672222

Newark Hospital: 01636 685692

Email: sfh-tr.PET@nhs.net

If you would like this information in an alternative format, for example large print or easy read, or if you need help with communicating with us, for example because you use British Sign Language, please let us know. You can call the Patient Experience Team on 01623 672222 or email sfh-tr.PET@nhs.net.

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