

## YAG Laser for Secondary Membrane After Cataract Surgery (Capsulotomy)

### What is a “secondary membrane”?

The natural lens of the eye is enclosed in a clear, cellophane-like membrane called the **capsule**. During cataract surgery the front of the capsule is opened. The cloudy lens inside the capsule is removed. In most cases, the back of the capsule is left in one piece, and a plastic lens implant is put in place in front of the capsule. In some patients, the capsule can become thickened and cloudy over time. This may happen a year or more after surgery. It is this thickened capsule that is called a “**secondary membrane**.” You may notice a slow decrease in vision, problems with glare, or things might look slightly hazy. If this becomes a problem, your doctor may suggest a YAG laser treatment to help clear your vision.

### What does the laser treatment involve?

The YAG laser is used to create a small hole in the center of the remaining capsule. You will first receive drops to dilate your pupils and to prevent a rise in your eye pressure. It takes 30-60 minutes for the drops to take effect. The laser treatment is then done in the clinic. The laser machine looks much like the slit lamp that the doctor has used at your visit. Just before the laser treatment, you will receive a numbing drop in your eye. A focusing contact lens will be placed on the eye. The treatment takes about 10 minutes and is not painful. Most patients say that they feel a slight “pop” or “shock” in the eye, but that it does not hurt.

Your eye pressure may be checked either right after the laser treatment or one to two hours later. Your eye may feel scratchy or seem blurry for the rest of the day, but should be back to normal by the next morning.

## **Are there any risks with laser treatment?**

The risks of the laser treatment are few. The laser can cause the eye pressure to rise during or after the treatment. You will be given a drop **before** the treatment to help prevent this. We could nick or damage the lens implant if it is hit directly with the laser. This rarely affects your vision. There could be slight inflammation in the eye. You will be given a prescription for medicine to take to reduce this. You may notice an increased number of floaters in your eye. Laser treatment can also slightly increase the chance of having a detached retina.

## **What happens after the treatment?**

Because your eye will be dilated, you may notice blurry vision for about 4 hours after the treatment. You may feel better wearing sunglasses, particularly in the bright light. Your eye may be scratchy for the rest of the day. There are no restrictions on what you can do.

Your doctor may give you a prescription for a drop to use four times a day for 5 days after the laser treatment. This drop helps prevent inflammation in the eye.

If your eye becomes painful or if you have a decrease in vision, call the clinic.

## **Phone Numbers**

University Station Eye Clinic, 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday  
**(608) 263-7171**

When the clinic is closed, your call will be forwarded to the hospital paging operator. Ask for the “Eye Resident on Call”. Give the operator your name and phone number with area code. The doctor will call you back.

If you live out of the area, call **1-800-323-8942** and ask to be transferred to the above number.

Please call if you have any questions or concerns.