

Paul S. Cunningham M.D., LLC

Andrew Kolker, M.D.

Pediatric and Adult Ophthalmology

9131 Piscataway Road ~ Suite 150 ~ Clinton, Maryland 20735

Phone: 301-868-8300

Selective Laser Trabeculoplasty

Why do I need the treatment?

Selective Laser Trabeculoplasty, or SLT for short, is a procedure to prevent visual loss from glaucoma, a disease of elevated eye pressure. To understand why SLT is recommended, it is important to understand what glaucoma does to the eye. The eye is filled with fluid, just as a basketball is filled with air. If there is more than the normal amount of fluid in the eye, the pressure of that fluid goes up. If the pressure gets too high, it causes damage to the nerve which connects the eye to the brain. Unfortunately, the nerve damage that occurs is irreversible, making blindness from glaucoma incurable. Fortunately, although we can't get vision back once it has been lost, we have excellent treatment to prevent vision loss. SLT is one of these effective treatments.

How Does the Treatment Work?

The fluid that fills the eye is made by a structure that is similar to a faucet. There is also a drain in the eye which takes old fluid out of the eye, so that between the running faucet and open drain, the fluid in the eye is constantly changing and renewing itself. Treatment for glaucoma aims to lower eye pressure by either "turning down the faucet" or "opening up the drain." SLT is a laser treatment that essentially aims to "unclog the drain," allowing fluid to leave the eye more easily and lowering the pressure. When the treatment is successful, eye pressure goes down because fluid leaves the eye more quickly.

Will Treatment Improve My Vision?

No, SLT will not improve your eyesight. If it successful, it will prevent you from losing your eyesight in the future.

What Could Go Wrong?

All medical treatment has the potential for side effects and SLT is no exception. Unfortunately, no treatments for any disease are successful 100% of the time, and SLT is again no exception. Some patients don't see their pressure improve after the laser. In other patients, the drain may "go into shock" and stop working temporarily. This can result in higher pressure shortly after the laser is completed. We ask you to stay for an hour after your treatment so that we can check your pressure. If it does go up, we may give you medication to control the pressure. Also, the vision in the treated eye may be slightly blurred for a few hours or so.

Does it Hurt?

Although patients may feel the laser, the sensation is not described as painful by most. If you do feel discomfort, let the doctor know, and the laser power can be lowered to improve your comfort. We will also give you drops before your SLT to prevent the eye pressure spike. These may result in a dull ache above the treated eye.

Will I Go Blind?

It is an uncomfortable truth that a prolonged pressure spike could lead to permanent vision loss in extreme circumstances. If the eye pressure goes up and stays up for a long period of time after laser is done,

there can be permanent damage and loss of sight as a result. This is an extremely rare occurrence. If Dr. Cunningham and/or Dr. Kolker have recommended SLT we feel that the high risk of losing your sight without treatment is greater than the very low risk of loss of sight from having treatment done. To date, no patients in our practice have lost their sight from having SLT done.

Will I Need to Have the Procedure Done Again?

The short answer is “maybe.” Sometimes after a few years, the drain of the eye accumulates more debris and becomes clogged again. SLT may be repeated to once again clean out the drain and lower the pressure. Fortunately SLT is performed with a “cold” laser which does not burn or damage the drain, so there is no limit to the number of possible retreatments.

What are my other choices?

The most common treatment for glaucoma is eye drops. Many patients for whom we recommend SLT have tried eye drops, but have not gotten sufficient pressure improvement from drops alone. There are also operating room procedures for glaucoma, but they are generally riskier than SLT. There is always the option to do nothing about your glaucoma. This is the highest risk option of all, with the greatest likelihood of eventual blindness.

I have read and understand this information and all my questions have been answered. I want to have SLT done.

Signature

Date