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SELECTIVE LASER TRABECULOPLASTY CONSENT FORM

Why do I need the treatment?

Selective Laser Trabeculoplasty, or SLT for short, is a procedure to prevent visual loss from glaucoma, which is a disease of elevated pressure. To understand why SLT is recommended, it is important to understand glaucoma and what it 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 Optic nerve which connects to the eye and to the brain. Unfortunately, the Optic 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 further 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 "Unclogging 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 is successful, it will prevent you from losing your eyesight in the future or prevent further damage to the optic nerve.

What could go wrong? What are the risks of this treatment?

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 finished. We will ask you to stay for an hour after your treatment is completed, so that we can check your eye pressure. If your eye pressure goes up, we may give you medication (eye drops) to control the pressure. Also, the vision in the treated eye may slightly get blurred for a few hours.

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 reduced to improve your comfort. We will also give you drops prior to the procedure, to numb the eye and to prevent the eye pressure from spiking. One of the drops that will be administered prior, 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 recommended SLT, we feel that the high risk of losing your vision without treatment is greater than the very low risk of sight loss from having treatment 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 in the future if needed.

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 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