

Laser for a Retinal Tear Improving and maintaining your vision.

■ **Problem**

The retina is a thin layer of tissue that lines the back of the eyeball and functions like the film in a camera (see handouts for diagram).

When a tear or hole develops in the retina, it can lead to a retinal detachment - a very serious condition which can lead to severe vision loss.

Therefore, when a hole or tear of the retina is noted, or a thinning of the retina predisposes to a tear or hole, we frequently use laser or freezing treatment to surround the problematic area. This seals the retina to the underlying eyewall, and usually prevents retinal detachment.

■ **Pre-treatment**

Please bring a driver with you.

If you are very anxious, you might consider taking a relaxation medication beforehand, but most patients do not require this.

You might also consider taking Ibuprofen, Tylenol, or a stronger pain medicine (as a precaution) if you have it on hand, as minor discomfort can be associated with the treatment, or after treatment.

■ **Procedure**

These treatments are performed either at the slit lamp (the same machine the doctor uses to examine your eye) or while lying back in an exam chair.

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Laser or cryo-retinopexy (freezing) spots are used to create a weld around the tear, hole, or thinning.

All patients receive topical anesthesia (numbing drops), but some physicians, depending upon preference and the type of pathology, will also administer a numbing injection.

The procedure itself typically takes anywhere from several minutes to 15 minutes, but occasionally extensive pathology will take longer to treat.

■ After treatment

If a numbing injection is used, you will need to have a patch over the eye for 1 – 6 hours, depending upon the type of injection.

Mild to moderate discomfort is normal, but severe pain isn't normal, and you should call our office immediately if this occurs.

Your vision will be blurry for some time after the procedure, or after the numbing medicine wears off, but it should return to its pre-treatment level within several days.

You might experience strobe light or kaleidoscopic effects following treatment, yet these should resolve with time as well. If not, please call our office to discuss.

The laser will not eliminate your floaters, which should clear spontaneously with time. If not, surgery to remove them can be considered at a later date.

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Supportive care should be undertaken – artificial teardrops if the eye is irritated, cool compresses for headache or eye ache, and Tylenol or Ibuprofen liberally for a day or two.

Some physicians prescribe eyedrops, depending upon the extent of the treatment.

Laser and freezing treatments take about two weeks to form their maximum adhesion. You may return to normal activity after the treatment, but avoid jarring or vigorous activity until seen for a follow-up exam and cleared to return to higher impact activity.

Please call our office immediately at **505-982-5716**:

- If discomfort is severe or persists.
- If blurry vision persists more than a few days.
- If symptoms of flashes and floaters increase, or vision takes a turn for the worse.