



Macular hole

Your eye doctor has told you that you have a macular hole. This leaflet will help you decide what to do. You might want to discuss the information with a relative or carer. If you have an operation, we will ask you to sign a consent form, so it is important that you understand the information in this leaflet before you agree to go ahead with surgery. If you have any questions, you might want to write them down to help you remember to ask one of the hospital staff.

What is a macular hole?

The retina is the thin layer of nerve tissue lining the back of the eye that detects light and sends information to the brain to allow us to see.

The macula is the central area of the retina and is used for seeing fine detail and reading. Sometimes, a hole forms in the macula, which affects your vision, particularly when reading and performing other visually demanding tasks, but it does not cause total blindness.

Figure 1(A) is a cross-sectional view of the retina showing how the macular hole appears inside your eye, and figure 1(B) shows the normal retina.

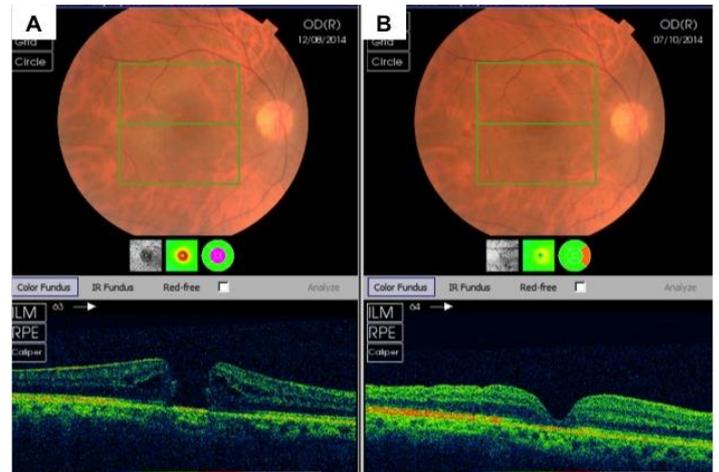


Figure 1: Optical Coherence Tomography (OCT) image of macular hole

A: Pre-operative (demonstrating macular hole).

B: Post-operative (demonstrating ‘closed’ macular hole)

Treatment of macular hole

The only consistently successful way to treat a macular hole (Figure 1) is an operation. Eye drops or glasses are ineffective. An alternative to surgery is a new therapy called ocriplasmin which is a drug injected into the eye. Although an initial study has shown that this treatment may be beneficial in selected cases, it is still undergoing clinical



assessment. Generally, it is not as reliable as surgery and the majority of patients treated with ocriplasmin will go on to have surgery. This option can be discussed with your consultant.

Some patients decide not to have surgery and accept the poor central vision in the affected eye. This is reasonable, especially if the vision in the other eye is not affected. There is no “right” or “wrong” decision as every person has different needs and priorities. You should discuss your reasons for wanting to proceed with an operation, or for deciding not to have surgery, with your consultant.

Risks of surgery

The success rate of macular hole surgery – a vitrectomy – depends on many factors, and you should discuss these with your eye doctor. Overall, there is about a 90% chance of “closing” the macular hole. Nevertheless, there is a small chance that your vision may not improve after surgery, even if the hole is “closed”. Surgery for macular hole repairs is generally very safe. However, there are risks and consequences:

- If you have not had cataract surgery, a macular hole operation will accelerate the development of a cataract. It is therefore likely that you will need cataract surgery in the future. The time frame for this can range from weeks to years.
- There are some possible complications following macular

hole surgery such as infection, inflammation, bleeding, retinal detachment, glaucoma and distortion or alteration of vision, but serious side effects are uncommon.

- There is a very small risk (less than one in 1,000) that you could lose the sight in the operated eye completely as a consequence of the operation.

Anaesthesia for your operation

Most operations for macular holes are performed under a local anaesthetic, which means you will be awake throughout your operation. We will inject local anaesthetic into the area around your eye to numb your eye and prevent you from feeling any pain during the operation. You will not be able to see details of what is happening, but you might be aware of the bright lights or movement in the operating theatre. During the operation, we will ask you to lie as flat as possible and keep your head still.

General anaesthesia, under which you are asleep for the whole operation, is rarely used for macular hole surgery. If you require a general anaesthetic, you will need to follow specific instructions about eating and drinking prior to your operation. Please ask for our leaflets on local and general anaesthetic if you would like more information, or refer to our website here:





Information and advice on eye conditions and treatments from experienced ophthalmic-trained nurses.

Patient advice and liaison service (PALS)

Phone: 020 7566 2324/ 020 7566 2325

Email: moorfields.pals@nhs.net

Moorfields' PALS team provides confidential advice and support to help you with any concerns you may have about the care we provide, guiding you through the different services available at Moorfields. The PALS team can also advise you on how to make a complaint.

Your right to treatment within 18 weeks

Under the NHS constitution, all patients have the right to begin consultant-led treatment within 18 weeks of being referred by their GP. Moorfields is committed to fulfilling this right, but if you feel that we have failed to do so, please contact our patient advice and liaison service (PALS) who will be able to advise you further (see above). For more information about your rights under the NHS constitution, visit www.nhs.uk/choiceinthenhs

