

Age-Related Macular Degeneration

Macular Degeneration: Intravitreal Injections

What is an intravitreal injection?

An intravitreal injection is a procedure where special medicine is injected into the inside of the eyeball. This procedure treats some kinds of wet, age-related macular degeneration (AMD) and similar conditions.

AMD is a disease that damages the macula in the eye. The macula is in the center of the retina. The retina is the lining at the back of the eye that senses light coming into the eye. The macula allows you to see fine details in the center of your field of vision.

There are two forms of AMD:

- The dry form of AMD causes a slow breakdown of light-sensitive cells in the retina, and may not greatly affect the vision.
- The wet form happens when abnormal blood vessels grow under the retina. These vessels leak blood and fluid and cause scarring. Vision loss from this damage can happen quickly.

When is it used?

Intravitreal injection may be used to treat some kinds of wet AMD. The special medicine can shrink the abnormal blood vessels when injected into the eye. The injections may need to be repeated every 4 to 6 weeks.

Instead of this procedure, other treatments or procedures may include:

- having a different procedure, such as laser treatment
- not doing anything about the abnormal blood vessels

You may choose not to have treatment. Ask our staff about your choices for treatment and the risks.

How do I prepare for the procedure?

- Plan for your care and a ride home after the procedure.
- Some medicines (like aspirin) may increase your risk of bleeding during or after the procedure. Ask your healthcare provider if you need to avoid taking any medicine or supplements before the procedure.
- You may or may not need to take your regular medicines the day of the procedure, depending on what they are and when you need to take them. Tell our staff about all medicines and supplements that you take.
- Do not wear eye makeup on the day of the surgery.
- Follow any other instructions our staff gives you.
- Ask any questions you have before the procedure. You should understand what your healthcare provider is going to do. You have the right to make decisions about your healthcare and to give permission for any tests or procedures.

What happens during the procedure?

This procedure is done in the doctor's office.

The staff numbs your eye with special eyedrops or ointment. Your eyelids are held open with a small device called a speculum. You may feel pressure during the injection but you should not feel sharp pain. The injection is very quick. After the injection, your doctor may check to make sure the pressure in your eye does not get too high. Your doctor may prescribe antibiotic drops to be used in the eye for a few days after the injection.

What happens after the procedure?

Usually you will have a follow-up appointment for an exam a month or more after the injection. Most people need several injections over time. Your provider will determine how many treatments you should have.

Ask our healthcare staff:

- how long it will take to recover
- what activities you should avoid
- how to take care of yourself at home and when you can return to your normal activities
- what symptoms or problems you should watch for and what to do if you have them

Make sure you know when you should come back for a checkup.

What are the risks of this procedure?

Some possible risks include:

- There is a risk of infection in the eye for the first week after injection. Infection is very rare, but can lead to severe vision loss.
- There is also a risk of a retinal tear or detachment after an injection. Symptoms include flashing lights or floaters, decreased or loss of vision, a shadow or curtain in your vision, pain, and redness of the eye.

Every procedure or treatment has risks. Ask our staff how these risks apply to you. Be sure to discuss any other questions or concerns that you may have.