

Patient information

Retinal vein occlusion

What is a retinal vein occlusion?

Retinal veins are blood vessels in the retina which carry blood out of the eye. When one of these vessels becomes blocked, as in retinal vein occlusion, it causes leakage of blood and fluid into the surrounding retina. Swelling in this area can occur with a vein occlusion, affecting the macula which is crucial for good vision.

What types of retinal vein occlusion are there?

There are four main branch veins in the retina which join together to form one central vein. When one of the branches becomes blocked it is called a Branch Vein Occlusion (BRVO). When the central vein is blocked, it is called a Central Retinal Vein Occlusion (CRVO).

What are the likely causes?

The doctor will check for any conditions known to increase the risk of developing an occlusion, such as:

- High Blood pressure
- High cholesterol

- Diabetes
- Rare blood disorders
- Glaucoma
- Smoking
- Age – most occur in people over 65 years of age
- Obesity

What treatment is available?

Your own doctor will treat any underlying general medical condition you may have, such as those listed above.

It is difficult to unblock or bypass the blocked vein. The only treatments given are aimed at preventing or treating complications. You may be offered one or more of the following treatments:

Laser treatment: Argon Laser treatment may help treat the new fragile blood vessels which bleed and help reduce the leakage of fluid into the retina. (There are other leaflets available on laser treatment.)

Steroid implant (Ozurdex): An anti-inflammatory medicine called Ozurdex (dexamethasone) is a long acting implant which is injected directly into the eye. It reduces the swelling that occurs due to the vein blockage. Treatment with Ozurdex can stabilise and even improve vision for between 3 – 6 months. Other leaflets are available on this treatment.

Intra-vitreous injection (Lucentis): Recent scientific advances have shown that a 'growth factor' (called VEGF A) is responsible for the

development of abnormal blood vessels with vein occlusion. Lucentis (an *anti*-VEGF drug) blocks this growth factor. Your treatment regime will usually start with a course of three injections, administered at monthly intervals, with a review appointment a month later (this can vary if you have had previous injection treatment), and further treatment as appropriate. For almost all patients, vision stays the same, and for many it improves. (There is another leaflet available on eye injections.)

My vision seems fine, does it matter if I skip appointments?

Effective treatment requires regular attendance in the clinic, as treatment needs to be monitored closely. Future treatment is decided on from the clinical outcome of each visit, but further injections will probably be required.

If I have lost some vision, will stronger glasses help instead of having treatment?

If a vein occlusion affects the back of your eye and is left untreated it cannot be simply improved by a stronger pair of glasses.

Employment problems

We understand that having regular visits to the Eye Clinic may cause problems for those that work. People with sight conditions may start needing extra time off for appointments or struggle with sight loss at work. Sight loss may have restricted you from driving and you're finding it impossible to get to and from work. Don't worry, we can help.

Employees with a sight condition often are regarded as unable to work or considered a problem for employers. Our Eye Clinic Liaison Officer (ECLO) can refer you to an Employment Adviser who can address this misapprehension and with the right advice and support. Employers can retain skilled and experienced staff, enabling employees to continue in the jobs of their choice.

Driving and sight loss advice

Discuss with your eye specialist, who can measure your level of sight and let you know whether this means you can drive or not, then contact the DVLA.

What are the basic eyesight requirements for driving?

There are two:

1. The 'number plate test'. In good light and with your glasses or contact lenses if you wear them, you must be able to read an 'old style' number plate 20.5 metres (22 yards) away.
2. You must have a good all-round field of vision so that you are aware of approaching vehicles and other hazards

I really need to keep driving and do not want to risk losing my licence

It is natural to be concerned at the prospect of losing your licence and not being able to drive again. It may feel like you would lose some of your independence and it can be particularly difficult if you are employed as a driver or someone relies on you to drive them about. You may even be

tempted to delay letting the DVLA know about your condition.

Talk it through with our ECLO who can give information to you in depth, including what this might mean for you if your job involves driving.

Ultimately, if you decide to keep driving and not inform the DVLA, you could face some very serious consequences to you and others.

Additional information

If you feel your eye condition has already started to affect your daily living tasks like driving, employment, reading, shopping our ECLO can offer information about the local and national services that are available to you.

Our ECLO can also offer advice on any support and entitlements that you may be eligible for. No appointment is needed just ask at reception or call direct on 01284 712805.

Useful contact numbers

Injection Co-ordinator: 01284 712721

Eye Clinic: 01284 713815

Eye Clinic Liaison Officer: 01284 712805

West Suffolk NHS Foundation Trust is actively involved in clinical research. Your doctor, clinical team or the research and development

department may contact you regarding specific clinical research studies that you might be interested in participating in. If you do not wish to be contacted for these purposes, please email info.gov@wsh.nsh.uk. This will in no way affect the care or treatment you receive.

If you would like any information regarding access to the West Suffolk Hospital and its facilities please visit the website for AccessAble (the new name for DisabledGo) <https://www.accessable.co.uk/organisations/west-suffolk-nhs-foundation-trust>



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