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Local anaesthetic for your eye surgery

Ophthalmology Department

What is a local anaesthetic?

- A local anaesthetic is a drug which stops you feeling pain.
- It can be given as eye drops and/or injections.
- Once you have been given the local anaesthetic you will still be awake and aware of what is happening, but the aim is that you feel no pain during the operation.

Advantage of having a local anaesthetic:

- It generally works very well at preventing you feeling any pain during the operation.
- It gives you pain relief after the operation for several hours.
- It usually has fewer risks and side effects than general anaesthetic, especially if you are elderly.
- Because it doesn't affect any other part of your body such as your breathing or your heart, people recover more quickly and can go home the same day.

Who gives the local anaesthetic and how is it done?

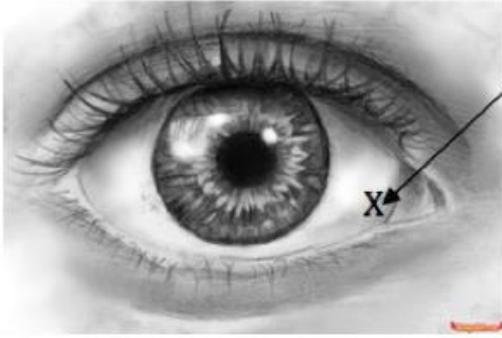
- Both anaesthetists and eye surgeons are trained to administer local anaesthetic.

There are two types of local anaesthetic:

1. Some operations are suitable to be carried out with numbing drops only.
2. Many operations require local anaesthetic injections as well as numbing drops.

Is the local anaesthetic injection painful?

- This varies from person to person.
- Eye drops that numb the surface of the eye are used first to make it as comfortable as possible.
- After this, an injection is given around the eye (not in the eyeball itself) using a special needle to complete the numbing process.



Local Anaesthetic is placed in the corner of the eye

You may feel stinging and/or pressure, which usually lasts less than a minute.

How do I know that the injection is working?

- Your doctor will check your eye to make sure it is numb.
- You may be asked to look in different directions to assess the effectiveness of the anaesthetic.
- Do not worry about blinking or moving your eye during the operation. The local anaesthetic will take care of this.
- When the anaesthetic starts working, your vision may become blurred. This will wear off when the local anaesthetic wears off.
- When they are happy that the anaesthetic has worked, you will be taken into the operating theatre.

Possible side effects of local anaesthesia

- Sub-conjunctival bruising – denser bruising to the white of the eye
- Chemosis – a collection of local anaesthetic at the front of the eye
- Muscle Palsy – double vision and a drooping eye lid for 24-48 hours after surgery

Are there any complications of local anaesthesia?

- Local anaesthesia for eye surgery is regarded as the safest anaesthetic for many people.
- Sometimes you may develop bruising or a black eye if the injection damages small blood vessels around the eye. This is not usually serious but can look unsightly for a week or so.
- It is more common if you take aspirin or other drugs that thin the blood, such as Clopidogrel or Warfarin.
- Rarely, there is more important bleeding around the eye. This can mean the operation will have to be delayed to another day until this settles.

Serious complications are very rare

- Although rare or very rare, damage to the eye, blood vessels or eye muscles can happen.
- Your heart, blood pressure and breathing can also be affected.
- Your anaesthetist or eye surgeon will be able to give you more information about these complications.

On the day of surgery

- Everything will be explained to you prior to your operation.
- You will have plenty of time prior to your surgery to visit the bathroom.
- We welcome any further questions you may have on the day.

Please remember that should any problems occur, the medical and nursing staff looking after you are trained in dealing with them.

Further information is available at: www.rcoa.ac.uk/patientinfo
(Search 'Local Anaesthesia for your eye operation')

**“This document is available in Welsh /
Mae’r ddogfen hon ar gael yn Gymraeg”.**