

Selective Laser Trabeculoplasty FAQS



Do You Have Glaucoma? Ask Your Physician about SLT Treatment.

Selective Laser Trabeculoplasty (SLT) is used to treat glaucoma, the leading cause of blindness in North America and Europe, and second leading cause worldwide. SLT is a type of laser surgery performed to treat glaucoma by lowering the eye's intraocular pressure (IOP).

Although risk factors for glaucoma include family history, diet, smoking and age, its actual cause often remains unclear. In many cases, glaucoma can progress gradually and go unnoticed for years. If left untreated, the resulting damage is the demise of the optic nerve leading to irreversible vision loss.

Many ophthalmologists treat glaucoma initially using topical eye drops until the medication starts to lose its ability to lower the patient's eye pressure. At that time, SLT is most often considered the next treatment option. However, some studies have shown that treatment using a laser first resulted in better long-term IOP control and patients taking fewer medications (Source: The Glaucoma Laser Trial (GLT) and glaucoma laser trial follow-up study: 7. Results. Glaucoma Laser Trial Research Group. Am J Ophthalmol 1995;120:6:718-31).

Depending on your medical history and needs, SLT may be a better first treatment option for you. We offer it here using LIGHTMED's laser product called LIGHTLas SLT. No incisions are necessary and it's a safe and effective treatment that takes place right in our clinic. Ask your doctor for details.

FAQS

1. Who should be treated using SLT?

Patients who have been diagnosed with open angle glaucoma and need to lower their IOP. SLT is beneficial for people who are concerned about medication costs and side effects, as well as those who have a difficult time remembering to take their eye drops. SLT treatment is FDA approved and is covered by Medicare and most insurance companies.

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FAQS

2. How does the SLT laser lower my IOP?

The SLT laser targets only pigmented cells in the trabecular meshwork of the eye. Doing so increases the drainage of aqueous fluid from the eye thereby reducing the patient's intraocular pressure. The short laser pulses of the SLT allow for targeted treatment without any damage to surrounding tissue.

3. What should I expect during an SLT procedure?

Patients will be given anesthetic eye drops to maximize comfort during the procedure. Your ophthalmologist will place a special lens on the eye to focus the laser and keep the lid open. You may see light flashes or hear a beeping sound during treatment. To help minimize inflammation, your doctor will prescribe anti-inflammatory eye drops. The procedure typically lasts only a few minutes.

4. What happens after an SLT procedure?

Once you return home, you may attend to your regular activities. Most patients do not experience any pain after an SLT procedure. Any mild discomfort or inflammation is normal after therapy and can be managed effectively with topical eye drops. Your doctor will require multiple follow up visits to monitor your IOP.

5. How effective is SLT treatment?

The result of SLT therapy is comparable to glaucoma prescription eye drops. Both treatments reduce the IOP by 25-30%. For SLT patients, their IOP typically falls a few weeks after treatment and lasts a few years. Once the effectiveness diminishes, patients may repeat the SLT treatment to further reduce their IOP without causing adverse effects or complications. Subsequent laser treatments may or may not be as effective as the first treatment.

6. Are eye drops still necessary after a successful SLT procedure?

This is patient specific. Some patients will not need additional glaucoma medication after SLT while others may still need eye drops to help control their eye pressure. In most cases, patients will take less medications than they did prior to SLT treatment.

7. Why go through SLT treatment if I might still need eye drops?

As the first line treatment therapy, SLT reduces long-term IOP by the same if not more than traditional prescription eye drops. Potentially not needing to take any eye drop medications (or at least taking less medications) is more convenient for all patients. SLT also works consistently throughout the day without any high or low IOP periods that are often related with eye drop only treatment. Just like any glaucoma treatment, SLT is not a cure. It's an additional treatment option that many glaucoma patients may consider.

8. Are there any risks?

As with any kind of medical treatment including prescription drugs, there may be some side effects. The SLT procedure has been around for over two decades and the risks are low even in comparison to eye drop treatment. Post therapy inflammation, if experienced, is mild and typically short-lived and easily treatable. A small percentage of patients may see an increase in IOP right after SLT treatment; however, it usually diminishes within 24 hours.