What is a retinal tear and why is a laser retinopexy being performed?

A retinal tear is a hole that forms in the outer portion of the retina. Tears can form as a result of posterior vitreous detachment, trauma or a membrane on the retina. People who have moderate or high myopia (-2.0 or greater eyeglasses prescription) are at a much greater risk for developing tears.

A retinal tear almost always precedes a retinal detachment. If left untreated, there is a much higher chance that a retinal detachment can form. A detachment forms because fluid from inside the eye is able to enter the tear, causing the retina to lift off (or detach) from the tissue below. To prevent a tear from causing a retinal detachment, the doctor will seal the retina around the tear.

If the tear is easily accessible, the doctor will use a laser to seal the hole. This is done by placing a large number of laser spots around the hole, which forms scar tissue over 14 days and acts like a barrier to prevent the retina from detaching. There is a small possibility that even with laser retinopexy treatment, a retinal detachment can form.

Please visit our website: www.retinaeye.com
**How is it done?**

The doctor or an assistant will place several drops in the eye to dilate and numb the eye, preparing it for the laser. Once the local anesthetic drop takes effect, you may receive a small amount of subconjunctival anesthetic in the outer part of the eye. The doctor will have you place your chin on the chin-rest and have you keep your forehead against the forehead-rest. Once in the proper position, a lens will be placed on the front of your eye, which is used to focus the laser precisely on the retina. Throughout the procedure, it is important that you keep your head still.

**Does it hurt?**

In some patients, the contact lens can cause irritation and/or discomfort. If the anesthetic eye drop is not sufficient to alleviate this discomfort, the doctor can inject a small amount of anesthesia into the top tissue layer of the eye. During the procedure, there may be a small pinching sensation with each laser spot. Depending on the amount of laser performed, you may also experience a headache after the procedure. Taking acetaminophen or ibuprofen is usually sufficient.

**What are the risks?**

Since no incisions are made to the eye, there is no risk of infection inside the eye. Some patients experience a slight irritation after the procedure from the lens being placed on the eye; however, this usually recedes quickly. As stated before, it is important that you do not move during the procedure. If you do, there is a possibility that the laser will affect a portion of your vision that it was not intended to (i.e. your central vision). There is also a very small possibility that the laser retinopexy does not completely seal the tear. Even after laser retinopexy, a retinal detachment can still form, though the possibility of one is greatly reduced with treatment.

**When should I call my Doctor if I think I am having a problem?**

Though the risks of complication are minimal, you should contact our office immediately if you experience any of the following symptoms: an increase of flashes or floaters, significant pain in your eye, extreme irritation, or redness, a large drop in your vision or the sensation of a black curtain coming across your vision.

**Do I need to take any special care or medications after my retinopexy?**

Yes. If you are diagnosed with a retinal tear, it is important you do not engage in any strenuous activity, jogging or other exercise after the laser treatment. Also, it is important that you do not participate in any activities that increase centripetal forces on your retina, like roller coasters, bungee-jumping, and boxing. Your doctor will inform you when normal activities can be resumed. Though it’s rare, you may experience some post-treatment pain in or around the eye for several days, which can be relieved by taking ibuprofen pain medication. If you prefer, acetaminophen can be substituted for ibuprofen. Your doctor will ask that you have frequent follow-up appointments so that the healing process can be closely monitored.

**My Post Laser Retinopexy Instructions**

- Call my Doctor immediately if I experience irritation of the eye that does not go away after several days.

- Call my doctor immediately if I experience an increase in flashes or floaters, or the sensation of a black curtain across my vision.

- Take 600-800 mg of Ibuprofen at home with food if you experience any pain in or around the eye.