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YAG Laser Posterior Capsulotomy

The most common complication of after cataract surgery is clouding of the part of the lens covering (capsule) that remains after surgery. This is called posterior capsule opacification. If the cloudiness affects your vision, you may choose to have a laser surgery called YAG posterior capsulotomy to correct this problem.

A laser (YAG laser) is used to cut a hole in the clouded back lining of the lens capsule to allow light to pass through the membrane to the retina at the back of the eye. The YAG laser is currently considered the best way to remove the back lining of the lens capsule.

What To Expect After Surgery:

YAG laser posterior capsulotomy is an outpatient procedure. It does not require anesthesia, and it is painless. The eye will need to be dilated for the procedure, but the vision should return back to normal 4-5 hours after the procedure. The person will need to seen back in the office 1-2 weeks following the procedure so that he or she can have the pressure in the eye (intraocular pressure) checked. Intraocular pressure (IOP) is the pressure caused by the fluid inside the eye that helps maintain the shape of the eye.

Why It Is Done:

Posterior capsular opacification affects about 1 in 4 people within 5 years of having cataract surgery. The cloudiness may develop gradually over several months or years. This is sometimes called after-cataract or secondary membrane. In some people, it can become very dense and cause as much or more vision loss as the original cataract.

The decision to have this procedure is based on the same criteria as the decision to have the original cataract surgery:

- Vision problems are affecting your work or lifestyle.
- Glare caused by bright lights is a problem.
- You cannot pass a vision test required for a driver's license.
- You have double vision.
- The difference in vision between your two eyes is significant.
- You have another vision-threatening eye disease.

The procedure is not necessary unless vision loss caused by clouding of the lens capsule is affecting the person's vision and lifestyle.

How Well It Works:

YAG laser posterior capsulotomy reduces glare and improves vision, allowing light to pass through cloudy regions of the lens capsule that may develop after cataract surgery.

Risks:

The most common complication of YAG laser posterior capsulotomy is short-term increased pressure inside the eye.

Other risks include:

- Detachment of the nerve layer at the back of the eye (retinal detachment).
- Swelling of the center of the retina (macular edema).
- Damage or displacement of the intraocular lens.
- Bleeding into the front of the eye.
- Swelling of the clear covering of the eye (corneal edema).

Please understand that these risks are extremely unusual, and the vast majority of patients obtain the desired improvement in their vision. Please talk with your doctor if you have any questions!