



# INTRAVITREAL (EYE) INJECTIONS

An eye injection (also called an intravitreal injection orIVI) is a procedure where medication is injected inside the eye into the vitreous. The vitreous is the jelly-like substance that fills the inside of your eye.

Eye injections are most commonly used to treat retinal and macular conditions such as wet macular degeneration (also known as age-related macular degeneration or AMD), diabetic retinopathy, diabetic eye disease and retinal vein occlusion. These conditions may require a long-term course of intravitreal injections to stop any swelling and bleeding. These injections aim to prevent, and potentially reverse, vision loss.

Intravitreal injections are not used to treat Stargardt disease (juvenile macular degeneration) but are sometimes used to treat ocular inflammation.

If the thought of having an eye injection is frightening, knowing and understanding what will happen can help enormously. It's important to continue with treatment as long as your doctor recommends it. Stopping treatment early can put your sight at risk.

## What happens when you get an intravitreal injection?

### 1. Testing by the orthoptist

You will be called from the waiting room by an orthoptist – an orthoptist is a university-trained technician who assists the ophthalmologist (eye specialist or eye doctor) by performing diagnostic eye tests. The orthoptist will check your vision and take an OCT scan of your eye to obtain high-quality images of the retina and macula.

OCT scans help your doctor monitor how your eye is responding to the injections.

The orthoptist will apply anaesthetic eye drops (or gel) and also clean your eye with antiseptic so your eye will be numb and sterile when it is time to have the injection.

### 2. Consultation with your ophthalmologist

Your ophthalmologist will review the results of your eye tests and OCT scan and discuss these with you before performing the eye injection.



### 3. The injection itself

While sitting in a chair or lying on a trolley, you will be asked to look at a specially marked target, usually on the ceiling – this helps you stay focused and keep your eye steady. The doctor will gently hold your eyelids open using their fingers and perform the injection quickly using a tiny needle.

After the injection, the doctor will examine your eye and apply a lubricating gel. You may be asked to use the gel for the next day or two to help lubricate the eye and reduce any gritty sensation.

### 4. Getting home

You will not be able to drive yourself home after your procedure – it's best not to drive for a few hours afterwards. You can have a family member or friend drive you home, or you can catch a taxi.

Please make sure the car windows are shut and don't let the fan blow on your eyes. Your eye will still be a little numb, which makes it more prone to drying out. The best thing to do is to keep your eyes closed for a couple of hours after the injection.

*Continued over page >>*



[visioneyeinstitute.com.au](http://visioneyeinstitute.com.au)



# INTRAVITREAL (EYE) INJECTIONS

## 5. At home

Your eye might feel a bit uncomfortable once the anaesthetic wears off. Over-the-counter pain relief (e.g. paracetamol) can be taken if necessary. If your vision becomes worse or your eye becomes more painful, contact your ophthalmologist or their clinic immediately. **DO NOT WAIT** until the next day or a convenient time.

## FAQs

### Are injections into the eye painful?

Injections into the eye are not painful because your eye will feel numb from the anaesthetic drops administered by the orthoptist. However, you may feel a bit of discomfort – most patients describe feeling slight pressure on their eye.

### Are eye injections dangerous?

There is a low risk of serious complications caused by eye injections (around 1 in 1000 or less).<sup>1</sup> These are retinal detachment and endophthalmitis (inflammation inside the eye).

Symptoms of retinal detachment include floating spots or lines and flashes of light, blurry vision, gradually diminishing side vision and a curtain-like shadow coming down over your visual field.

Symptoms of endophthalmitis include increasing or severe eye pain, increasing redness of your eye, worsening vision, headache and eyelid swelling.

### Can I drive myself home after an eye injection?

No, you will need to have someone else drive you home after your eye injection. It is best if you keep your eyes closed for a couple of hours after the injection to stop them from drying out and feeling uncomfortable.

### Do I really need to have eye injections?

If your ophthalmologist has determined that eye injections are the best treatment for your condition, it is important to continue with them as often as recommended. Stopping treatment against the advice of your ophthalmologist could put your sight at risk.

### Will eye injections give me my vision back?

In some situations, treatment with eye injections will restore some vision. Your ophthalmologist will be able to provide more specific advice.

### How often do I need to have eye injections?

This depends on your particular condition and how you respond to treatment. If your eye is responding well, your ophthalmologist may try to extend the interval between injections.

If you think you have symptoms of retinal detachment or endophthalmitis, or your eye becomes increasingly painful following an eye injection, contact your ophthalmologist or local eye emergency department right away.

**DO NOT WAIT** until the next day or a convenient time.

Make sure you have the correct emergency contact numbers **BEFORE** you leave the clinic. Save these numbers on your mobile phone for quick access.

## REFERENCE:

1. RANZCO Guidelines for Performing Intravitreal Therapy. Available at <https://bit.ly/2WRVExO> (accessed online November 2019).



[visioneyeinstitute.com.au](http://visioneyeinstitute.com.au)

