

Selective Laser Trabeculoplasty (SLT)

Patient Information



The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) guidelines in the UK now recommend Selective Laser Trabeculoplasty (SLT) as a first-line treatment option for newly diagnosed Ocular Hypertension (OHT) and Primary Open Angle Glaucoma (POAG). Below are some key aspects of SLT.

Purpose

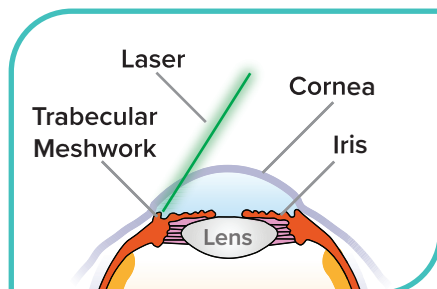
SLT is a type of laser light treatment used to manage glaucoma, a condition that damages the optic nerve, often due to high eye pressure. SLT is designed to reduce eye pressure by improving the drainage of fluid from the eye.

First-line treatment

NICE guidance now recommends SLT as the first-line treatment for some patients with open-angle glaucoma and ocular hypertension, as a safer alternative to eye drops in many cases.

How it works

A low-intensity laser light is used to target specific cells in the trabecular meshwork, a tissue in the eye that helps drain fluid. By stimulating these cells, SLT aims to improve fluid outflow, thereby lowering eye pressure.



Effectiveness

Studies show an average success rate of around 70-80%. However, individual responses can vary and some patients may require additional treatment. The effects of SLT can diminish over time, with about 50% of treatments lasting for five years.

Suitability

SLT is not suitable for all types of glaucoma particularly angle closure and individual responses vary.

Individualised approach

The decision to use SLT is made on a case-by-case basis, taking into account the patient's individual circumstances and preferences. How well SLT works can vary from person to person, depending on the type and severity of glaucoma, and individual eye characteristics.

Reduced reliance on the need for daily eye drops

In some cases, SLT can reduce the need for or even eliminate the use of glaucoma medications.

What happens during SLT?

The procedure is relatively quick, usually taking 5-20 minutes, and most people can resume normal activities the next day. The procedure is performed as an outpatient procedure and involves using a laser to target the trabecular meshwork, a part of the eye's drainage system.

Side effects

SLT is generally considered safe, but mild discomfort, blurred vision, and sensitivity to sunlight are common side effects for a few days after the procedure.

Follow-up care

Patients typically require follow-up appointments to monitor their eye pressure. While SLT can be effective, it's important to have realistic expectations and the need for ongoing management. SLT may be repeated as it does not damage the trabecular meshwork.

Summary

In essence, SLT is a valuable tool in the management of glaucoma and ocular hypertension, and NICE guidance now reflects its importance as a first-line treatment option when appropriate.

