

# Macular disease treatment



## What is macular disease?

Macular disease affects the part of the retina called the macula. The retina is the light sensitive layer at the back of the eye which sends information to your brain so you can see. The macula is responsible for central fine detailed vision. Some conditions which affect your macula can cause distortion or reduction in central vision, making reading, driving and recognising faces difficult. Treatments such as anti-VEGF injections can slow down the deterioration of your vision or stop it from getting worse.

## What is anti-VEGF treatment?

Anti-VEGF (vascular endothelial growth factor) treatments are a group of medicines which reduce new blood vessel growth or oedema (swelling). They are given by an injection into the eye to reduce the risk of scarring and damage to the retina caused by these new vessels, which in turn can help to avoid further sight loss and for some people cause an improvement in vision.

## What treatment does the Eye and Ear provide?

The Eye and Ear sees around 200,000 patients a year in our specialist Outpatient Clinics. We accept patients who meet our referral guidelines for assessment and treatment and try to ensure that the people most in need of our specialist services can be seen in a reasonable timeframe by our specialist ophthalmologists. Due to the availability of anti-VEGF treatment in the community and the current demand on our services, we are unable to accept referrals for continuation of treatment with anti-VEGF injections if treatment has already commenced elsewhere (for example with a private ophthalmologist or in another public hospital).

## Why will I be discharged if I still have the condition?

Patients are discharged as outpatients at the Eye and Ear if their condition has been resolved, is considered stable, or can be managed by their GP or other health professional in the community. If you are having anti-VEGF injections, this will usually take a maximum of three treatments at the Eye and Ear to stabilise and then you will be referred to a specialist in your local area for ongoing treatment. Being a highly specialised hospital our focus is on treating patients with urgent and complex conditions.



## What are my treatment options?

When you are discharged from Outpatients your GP will receive a letter with a summary of your condition and a management plan for your regular treatment.

GPs can provide care for all aspects of their patients' health, not just their eyes. Many patients with macular disease will have general medical problems such as diabetes, high blood pressure and cholesterol. GPs may also provide referrals to local community ophthalmologists for ongoing management of chronic eye conditions, and having a current referral will allow you to access your Medicare rebate. Please note, however, that there may still be an out of pocket expense.

When you are discharged from the Eye and Ear, if you need ongoing treatment from an ophthalmologist, a referral letter will be given to you to provide to the ophthalmologist who will be continuing your care. The initial referral from the Eye and Ear specialist will be valid for three months, so this will cover your first visit to the local ophthalmologist.

## Where can I find treatment in my local area?

If you need to find a GP, specialist or other health services near your home, you can enter your suburb in the 'Find a Health Service' area on the Better Health Channel website: [www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au](http://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au).

You can also visit the RANZCO website ([www.ranzco.edu](http://www.ranzco.edu)) where a list of ophthalmologists and service providers in Victoria is available.

## More information

For more information about your appointment please contact the Outpatients Booking Unit on (03) 9929 8500 between 8.00am and 4.00pm, Monday to Friday (except public holidays).

For information on macular diseases and to find an ophthalmologist, visit the Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Ophthalmologists website [www.ranzco.edu](http://www.ranzco.edu).

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