



PATIENT & CAREGIVER EDUCATION

How to Care for Your Child After Ophthalmic Laser Therapy for Retinoblastoma

This resource explains what retinoblastoma (REH-tih-noh-blas-TOH-muh) is. It also explains how to care for your child after they get ophthalmic (of-THAL-mik) laser therapy.

In this resource, the words “you” and “your” refer to you or your child.

About retinoblastoma

Retinoblastoma is a type of eye cancer that starts in the retina. Your retina is the layer of tissue in the back of the eye that is sensitive to light.

About ophthalmic laser therapy

Ophthalmic laser therapy is a non-invasive procedure used to treat retinoblastoma. Non-invasive means nothing is put into your eye. Laser therapy uses focused light to target and destroy cancer cells in the eye. An ophthalmic oncologist will do your laser therapy. They can use laser therapy to treat 1 or both eyes.

You’ll get general anesthesia (A-nes-THEE-zuh) before your procedure. General anesthesia is medicine to make you sleep during your procedure.

You may also get an intravenous (IV) injection (shot) of a special dye into your vein. This helps the laser work better during your procedure.

Laser therapy usually takes about 5 to 20 minutes.

If you're a caregiver, you'll stay with your child until they get anesthesia and fall asleep. A staff member will bring you to the waiting area. Once your child wakes up, you can go back to the recovery area with them.

Side effects of ophthalmic laser therapy

Side effects right after laser treatment include:

- Feeling mild (not bad) discomfort or pain or pressure in the eye.
- Redness in the eye.
- Mild swelling in the eyelid that lasts a few days.
- Vision problems, such as being sensitive to light, blurry vision, or partial vision loss. This should go away as the eye heals.
- Watery eyes that last a few days.

How to care for your child after laser therapy

Use eye protection

Wear sunglasses when going outside. Sunglasses protect your eyes from bright lights and UV rays from the sun. If you can, use dim light when indoors.

Avoid rubbing your eyes. Rubbing can irritate them or cause more harm.

Manage discomfort

Your doctor may prescribe eye drops to reduce swelling and help your eyes heal. Follow their instructions carefully.

If you feel pain, use over-the-counter pain medicine (medicine you get without a prescription). Examples include acetaminophen (Tylenol®) or ibuprofen (Advil®). Follow your doctor's instructions.

Tell us if you notice changes in vision

Tell your healthcare provider if you notice any changes in vision, such as:

- Less vision than usual. In very young children, they may bump into objects in the room.
- Touching or rubbing your eye more than usual.
- Blurriness
- Double vision
- Seeing spots.

Keep a normal routine

Visiting family and friends and being around others can help you feel normal after treatment. Keep doing your normal activities, if you can.

Schedule follow-up visits

Schedule regular eye exams with your healthcare provider. This helps make sure that the treatment worked and lets them watch for any problems. Follow your healthcare provider's instructions for scheduling follow-up visits.

When to call your healthcare provider

Call your healthcare provider right away if you have any of these after treatment:

- More redness or swelling than usual in the eye that was treated.
- Pain that does not go away after taking over-the-counter pain medicine.
- Bleeding or discharge from the eye that was treated.
- Loss of vision or sudden changes to your vision.
- Sensitivity to light that gets worse or does not go away after 3 days. This is discomfort or pain caused by sunlight or bright lights.
- More tears in 1 or both eyes than usual that does not go away after 3 days.

Contact information

Call MSK's retinoblastoma team at 212-639-7232 if you have any questions or concerns. They're available Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. After hours call 212-639-2000 and ask for the pediatric fellow on call. You can also send your care team a message on MSK MyChart (MSK's patient portal).

If you do not have an MSK MyChart account, you can sign up at mskmychart.mskcc.org. You can also ask a member of your care team to send you an invitation.

If you have questions or concerns, contact your healthcare provider. A member of your care team will answer Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Outside those hours, you can leave a message or talk with another MSK provider. There is always a doctor or nurse on call. If you're not sure how to reach your healthcare provider, call 212-639-2000.

For more resources, visit www.mskcc.org/pe to search our virtual library.

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