

Patient Information Sheet: Understanding the Benefits of Retinal Drug Treatments and the Risks of Increased Eye Pressure or Glaucoma

What is the Provincial Retinal Diseases Treatment Program?

The Provincial Retinal Diseases Treatment Program (PRDTP) was first established in 2009 to provide no charge coverage of drug treatments for patients with eligible retinal diseases when treated by a program retinal specialist. The drug treatments are very effective to preserve vision, improve vision and/or prevent blindness. The program currently treats over 22,000 patients throughout the province.

Is there a risk of increased eye pressure or glaucoma with the drug treatments?

With any medical treatment, there are benefits and potential risks. One of the known risks with having retinal diseases, and with receiving retinal drug treatments, is the possibility of increased eye pressure (intraocular pressure). If increased eye pressure is sustained and results in damage to the optic nerve, this can result in glaucoma (where vision is worsened). Interventions such as eye drops, oral medications, laser and or/surgical procedures can effectively manage increased eye pressure (to avoid optic nerve damage) and/or glaucoma (to prevent worsening glaucoma).

What is the level of risk of retinal drug treatments and glaucoma?

The estimated risk is very low e.g. less than 1%. In collaboration with experts, researchers, glaucoma and retinal specialists, the Provincial Health Services Authority (PHSA) completed several quality reviews to better understand the risks of glaucoma treatment for retina patients. Any drug treatment can have side effects. If these retinal drug treatments are not provided, then all patients with these retinal diseases will experience visual deterioration over time.

What are the factors associated with the risk of glaucoma?

Because the risk is very low, few patients are expected to experience glaucoma. The quality reviews found that certain patient characteristics were associated with higher risk of glaucoma treatment. This included patients who are younger, male, have certain retinal diseases types, have prior glaucoma, and those who receive higher total treatments per year. There was also some variation found among providers. Drug type was not found to be associated with higher risk.

What is being done to minimize the potential glaucoma risk?

As part of your eye care, your retinal specialist will review with you the potential benefits and risks of the treatments and will determine with you the best course of action to manage your retinal disease and potential risks. For example, the high risk of vision deterioration without drug treatments needs to be balanced with the very low risk of glaucoma. The PHSA will continue to support the program's quality improvement work with your clinician and other experts and will make program changes as needed.

If I have concerns about increased eye pressure or glaucoma, what should I do?

Please talk with your retinal specialist or other eye care professional who you see on a regular basis.

[Follow this link](#) for more information about the PHSA Program and the quality reviews.

[Follow this link](#) for more information on eye pressure or glaucoma and treatment.