

# XEN gel implant



## **What is the XEN gel implant?**

This is a very small, flexible tube made of porcine gelatine that creates a new pathway for fluid to drain from the eye, reducing eye pressure.

The XEN gel implant is 6mm in length and nearly as thin as a strand of human hair. The gelatine material is well accepted by the human body.

## **Who is suitable for a XEN gel implant?**

It is best suited to patients with mild and moderate glaucoma where eye pressure cannot be adequately lowered with eye drops or laser.

## **How does it work?**

Glaucoma is commonly associated with a build up of fluid pressure inside the eye. Eye pressure increases because the eye's fluid drainage channels become blocked.

The XEN gel implant is placed in your eye to make a new permanent pathway to allow excess fluid to drain from inside the eye into a small blister (or bleb) under the skin of the eye (conjunctiva), just under the upper eyelid. You will not normally see the bleb, however if you look in the mirror and raise your upper eyelid you may be able to see it. The fluid drained from inside the eye is different from tears.

## **What are the benefits?**

The XEN gel implant is designed to lower eye pressure and reduce the risk of vision loss from glaucoma. The procedure to insert the implant is faster, more straightforward and less invasive than traditional operations for glaucoma. The procedure is performed through a microscopic incision in the clear window of the eye (cornea). Unlike traditional surgery, scissors and stitches are not required.

The implant will not cure your glaucoma, reverse any damage already caused by glaucoma, or bring back any lost vision.

## **What does the operation involve?**

The operation is usually performed under a local anaesthetic, meaning that you are awake but your eye is numbed so you will not feel anything. Your eye will be numbed with eye drops and then a small injection will be given around your eye so you will not feel anything. The injection may cause a pressure sensation and brief discomfort. The local anaesthetic takes several hours to wear off and may affect your vision during this time. The procedure can be performed by itself or combined with cataract surgery.

The implant is injected through a small self-sealing incision in the clear part of the eye using a special injector. The procedure takes around 10 minutes.

During the procedure a medication called mitomycin C may be applied. This is used to reduce scarring and is designed to help enhance the long term success of the operation. At the end of the procedure your operated eye will be padded and covered with an eye shield. If your unoperated eye does not see well, your operated eye may not be padded and instead covered with a clear plastic shield.

You will usually be able to go home the same day as your operation. You will need to be seen one week later.

## **How soon will I recover?**

Following surgery your eye may be slightly bloodshot and swollen for a few days. Your vision may also be blurry for 1-2 weeks afterwards. You will usually have no sensation from the presence of the bleb. You may read and watch television – these activities will not harm your eye. You will need to wear a shield over your eye at night for the first week or so, to prevent accidental injury to your eye whilst you are asleep.

You will be given new anti-inflammatory and antibiotic eye drops to prevent inflammation and infection. The anti-inflammatory drops will usually need to be continued for three months.

The XEN gel implant will begin to work straight away to lower your eye pressure and you should stop taking your glaucoma drops in the operated eye. Any drops you use in your other eye must be continued as normal.

## **When can I resume normal activities?**

As with all eye surgery, avoid strenuous activity for the first month including swimming, tennis, jogging and contact sports. You will usually need 1-2 weeks off work following surgery, however the length of time will depend on the nature of your work.

It is safe to fly after surgery; however you will need to be seen regularly by your surgeon in the early post-operative period.

## **When can I resume driving?**

**Please do not drive until your doctor feels it is safe to do so.** You will be advised at your post-operative clinic appointments. Look at your vehicle insurance policy about any clauses on eye surgery prior to driving.

## **Are there any risks or complications?**

Serious problems are fortunately rare (see notes below on medication advice). There is a risk the implant could become blocked or come out of position. If the tube becomes blocked you may require a minor procedure in the outpatient clinic or to return to theatre.

In some cases the XEN gel implant may not lower eye pressure or its effect may wear off with time. If the implant fails to lower your eye pressure you may need to restart your glaucoma medications or have further procedures to control your eye pressure.

Rarely, you may be aware of the drainage bleb. If this is causing pain or discomfort, steps may need to be taken to make the bleb more comfortable.

## **Medication advice**

If you are taking medications to 'thin the blood' (for example aspirin, Warfarin or Clopidogrel), please discuss with your GP and if they are in agreement, please continue taking:

- **aspirin/Clopidogrel/Dipyridamole** – 10 days prior to your operation

- **Warfarin** – five days prior to your operation, and have an INR blood test 3-5 days before at your GP surgery. If your reading is not in your therapeutic range please discuss this with your nurse and ask to have a repeat INR check again one day prior to your surgery date.
- **Rivaroxaban/Apixaban** – two days prior to surgery.

If your GP does not wish you to discontinue anti-platelet/anti-coagulation therapy please inform us of this well in advance of your procedure.

Please restart your blood thinning medication after your operation, ie same evening or the following morning, whenever your next dose is due.

### **Are there any alternatives?**

The alternatives to XEN gel implant insertion are traditional glaucoma operations such as trabeculectomy or aqueous shunt implantation. Your surgeon will discuss with you why he/she has advised a XEN gel implant and also other surgical options.

### **Contact us**

If you are worried about your eye after the procedure or have any questions, please contact the Eye Unit nurse on **01872 252324**.

If you would like this leaflet in large print, braille, audio version or in another language, please contact the General Office on 01872 252690

