

## **Laser Treatment log...! (Issue 1)**

I'm not going overboard with this, but there's a few folk on this list who have asked for details, so basically going to split my experience up into three posts, being The Consultation, The Treatment Day, and The Week After:-)

### **1. Consultation.**

It was a little bit like being on a production line, to be honest. A lot of tests with short-ish waits in the waiting room in between.

**Stage 1:** Go into reception and fill in form. Lots of ticky-box stuff. Are you pregnant or thinking of becoming pregnant? Erm. No. Are you on any medication, if so, give details. How did you hear about us, etc.

**Stage 2:** Went in and got my eyes tested. Basic bog-standard eye test. Result -6.0 in both eyes. Lots of letters, read the lowest line, red circles/green circles, etc. Also had a talk about not everyone being suitable for treatment, types of treatment, lots of questions about whether I did any contact sports, and a basic explanation of the procedure, being thus:

Flap cut in front of eye. Flap lifted up, laser re-shapes the surface underneath the flap, flap put back down.

**Stage 3:** A short wait.

**Stage 4:** More tests.

a) Detailed perscription test. This is a full-eye scan all the way across your eye. In my case the prescription was about -6.0 at the centre to -5.6 at the edge of the eye on both eyes, but it was quoted to three significant figures, and pretty much maps out how each bit of the eye focuses. All you actually see is a small picture of a mountain going into and out of focus. Takes about 10 secs for each eye. This also shows any astigmatism (yes, I have some, but not a right lot).

b) Abberation map: Basically shines a light (red dot, yes) into your eye, and measures what is reflected back.

This gives a map of how "smooth" the surface of your eye is. The more abberations, the more you are affected by glare, halos etc at night. That and the above allows them to minimise the amount of tissue they take from the eye.

Done three times for each eye is about 10 mins. This also gives them a measure of how thick the surface of the eye is

- i.e. do you have a thick enough eye for them to start carving away at it.

c) Intra-ocular pressure test. Three puffs of air into each eye. Startling.

Next the dilation drops, which make you look like you are seriously high. They then redo the top two of the above three tests with a dialated pupil. The drops feel like you've just got the contact lens cleaning solution in your eye, Ouchy, but it dies off after about 30 seconds.

**Stage 5:** A long wait.

**Stage 6:** Back to the eye-test room.

d) Health check on the eye. More drops (two sets), bright white light. Given your pupils are dilated this hurt a bit, but not much. Just a bit too bright.

e) Ultrasound check of the eye. No idea what this was for. Took about 10 secs for each eye.

Long-ish natter was next. Ok, you are suitable for pretty much any treatment you want, what do you want?

Here are the risks, read this, lots of detailed answers to questions I hadn't asked, what the after-care was like, what I could/couldn't do after treatment. How good will vision be after treatment, etc.

**Stage 7:** A short wait.

**Stage 8:** Over to the head of the "nursing team" - who basically now production-line you onto the actually-going-to-have-it-done customer. Finance options and credit check (£80 a month interest free for three years), book the actual day of treatment, here is a really big glossy pack, read it carefully, have an argument about how long I wasn't going to be able to climb (we compromised - He said two weeks, I said I'd like to climb this weekend (day after treatment), he said NOT A FUCKING CHANCE MATEY (or words to that effect), we compromised at one and a bit weeks). Basically the problem is that the eye is prone to infection after treatment, so sweat dripping into your eye is RIGHT OUT OK? Ditto dancing in a smoky environment, etc, which is when Wendyhouse went west...

Oh, and bring wrap shades for the day of treatment.

**Stage 9:** Leave the building.

Not too bad, and about two and a half hours in total. I had company all the way through as there's a new starter there and what they do with new starters is get them to follow one patient all the way through so they know what is going on. I was asked if I minded a personable lass watching my eyes being cut open, and didn't have any objection I could work out, and it was someone to talk to during the waiting room interludes...

## **Laser Treatment Log Issue 2: Treatment Day....**

[Note, I've been updating this through the day, so if I wander from present to past tense and then back to present that's why..It's also very detailed, as those people who are thinking of having it done have asked for details]

Got to the clinic at 9am, and was out and treated by 10.10am. That was quick!

**Stage 1:** Go into room (bog standard eye test room) with surgeon. He used bright light thing to do a quick check, and also put some lenses in some testing specs, and asked me to read the letters on the board as per normal. I'd guess the lenses were nowhere near my prescription, as vision was poor. Hmmn...

Then a long spiel.

1. Because of my prescription and the thickness of my eye surface, it is theoretically unlikely for me to be able to have a second treatment. He then explained in a lot of detail that it was **practically** highly likely for me to be able to have a second treatment. A lot of the conversation was like this.

(a) here is the politically correct spiel.

(b)and here's what I, as a surgeon, actually think.

2. I may not get good vision in both eyes. There is a 1 in 300 chance that each eye may not make 20/20 vision. Hence 1 in 90,000 that neither will. The higher your prescription the lower those odds get.

3. There is a 1 in 350 chance the flap may go horribly wrong. If this occurs he will put it back and treatment is delayed for 3-6 months whilst it heals.

4. As my eyes heal they may regress to a low prescription (say 0.5ish either long or short sight). About 3 % of cases do this.

5. Lots of do's and don'ts. I won't list them here.

**Stage 2:** led through to Pre-treatment room.

Comfy room with soothing music. The nursing staff wandered in after about 10 mins and introduced themselves, and then wandered out for another 10 mins.

**Stage 3:** Pre-op.

Nursing staff re-appear, drag me into pre-op. Hairnet on, bags round my shoes and gown on. Then they went through the various eye drops I have to use every two hours for the first 24 hours and then every 4 hours for the next week. Basically one set of drops is anti-inflammatory, the other is antiseptic. More info on what I can and cannot do, and also demonstration and explanation of the eye patches you have to sleep in for two weeks and how to attach thm (they are hard plastic eye patches, on for each eye and separate. I had visualised something like airline eyepatches but no, nothing like. Attached to face with micropore tape.

Next was washing my eyelids with iodine, and then waiting around for the bell to go.

**Stage 4:** Treatment.

Bell goes, Nurse puts anesthetic drops in my eye, and off we go to treatment room. Now, bear in mind glasses are off, so as far as what was in there I saw one large white blob which was the laser machine and four large white blobs which were the surgeon, the laser technician, and two nurses.

Treatment....

a) lie down on couch, with head in recess in couch. The couch then swivels under the machine, and you can see three lights, green, red (flashing) and yellow. The machine was, I reckon, about 8-12 inches

above my face. I thought it would be about on my nose, but no, quite a long way away. VERY bright white lights on machine as well (I kept asking them to turn them down, as they were THAT bright they hurt). You are told to stare at the red flashing light.

b) LOTS more anesthetic drops.

c) Thingy which keeps your eyelids open. I was told it would be uncomfortable, and it wasn't at all. Could barely feel it.

d) Cutting the flap. Easily the most unpleasant bit, and not very unpleasant at all. If you can imagine pressing your closed eyelid hard with your thumb for about 10 seconds that's about it.

e) a bit of messing by the surgeon - you can't see what he's doing, and it takes about 5 seconds. No idea. Probably messing with the flap.

f) Oh dear what has happened to my vision. All very blurry.

g) "Stare straight ahead please". "Treatment being applied in four bursts"

"Burst 1" [bzzzzz]

"Burst 2" [bzzzzz]

"Burst 3" [bzzzzz]

"Burst 4" [bzzzzz]

Those four bursts of the laser took about 3 seconds each. You don't feel a thing. At all.

h) Surgeon re-appears. LOTS AND LOTS of eye drops. It feels and looks like he's up-ended a large glass of water in your eye.

i) And then something wonderful. The surgeon drops the flap back and the machine above my head sprang into focus. Wahay!!

j) MORE Eye drops, and a certain amount of mopping up surplus eye drops with a small tissue.

k) "Right, close you eyes and let the nurse guide you to a chair"

l) stayed on chair with eyes closed for about a minute whilst they set the machine up for the other eye, and it was a repeat of the above.

m) Put on shades, walk out room and into post-op room. NOT guided by the nurse, and with MUCH better vision. Very blurry, but I remember thinking "I could climb as I am at present!"

**Stage 4:** About 15 mins in the post-op room. Right eye starts to get sore.

**Stage 5:** Surgeon comes along again, and drags me back to the eye-test room. Bright light check of eye again, Surgeon says "excellent". I pointed out that the right eye was sore. He replied that it was totally ok and as the anesthetic wore off the left eye would catch up (my right eye was done first). Couldn't help but seeing if I could read the letters over his shoulder - bottom line sharp and clear with right eye (Yippee!). Left eye was a big white blur - presumably as it was still under anesthetic.

**Stage 6:** Nurse takes me down to taxi.

**Stage 7:** The taxi ride home was easily the worst experience of the whole event. I was very very very light sensitive, even on an overcast day in Leeds with wrap shades on, and was feeling nauseous (probably the taxi driver's driving), and my eyes felt as if someone had emptied a bucket of sand in them.

**Stage 8:** Home, close curtains in front room, set the alarm for the first set of drops, lie down with eyes closed. Eyes felt as if they had grit in them, vision good, but blurry. Eyes sore.

**Stage 9:** Rest of day;

12.00-2pm. Dozing in dark room with shades on.

2pm-4pm: took the shades off, and got gradually less and less light-sensitive. No pain from eyes except the occasional feeling that they were gritty. Vision was slightly blurry, especially in the left eye...

Impromptu vision test at 3pm.....

With my left eye I can see the windows in individual houses on the other side of the valley (1 2 miles away). With my right eye I can see what colour curtains they have in the windows. My vision NOW (3pm) is as good as corrected vision before treatment. With the treatment I had (UltraLasik plus with wavefront) my vision will be expected to steadily improve further over the next three-five days.

For about half an hour after the eye drops go in vision is blurry, and just before the eye drops go in the eyes are starting to dry out. Eye drops go in every two hours.

At 4 pm eyes feel back to normal again.

I'll leave it at that for now:-) I'll do a final update in a few days.

Right now I am Bored. Very Very Bored. And Chuffed to bits, of course:-)

## Laser Treatment Log (Issue 3 - Final - The Week After)

### **Saturday**

Saturday (day after) went to the clinic for the day-after check-up. 20/20 vision in left eye, 20/10 in right, 20/10 composite.

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[by the way, the 20/20 refers to a distance (20ft) where you can read a certain size of letter (actually the first 20 is the standard viewing distance (20ft) and the second 20 is the distance (20ft) at which each letter of this line subtends 5 minutes of arc.

i.e. 20/40 (driving standard) means that you can read at 40ft what a "normal" person can read at 20ft (i.e. vision worse than normal), and 20/10 means you can read at 20ft what a "normal" person can read at 10ft (i.e. vision better than normal). To give an idea 20/200 is legally blind in the US and the top letter on eye test charts (the HUGE "A") is normally 20/60. The above are the US measurements. The UK uses metric, which is 6/6 (6 metres / 6 metres). I am therefore about 6/3.

If you want to know more, go to <http://webvision.med.utah.edu/KallSpatial.html>]

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Hence my vision is better than "normal".

Four times a day you have to dump two sets of eye drops in your eye - the antibiotic ones which taste AWFUL. Not that you intend to get them anywhere near your mouth, but they tend to go down tear ducts and end up in your mouth. You really, really don't want to taste them. As soon as you taste them you start to gag. The others are anti-inflammatories and are fine.

Saturday I went out "walking" in a high lonely place, and although my eyes were fine, they did dry out due to the wind - hence dumped the third set of drops - artificial tears - which you use "as required" in and that sorted it.

### **Sunday**

Right eye ached, left eye was still "fuzzy". Actual focusing was fine, but everything I looked at with that eye was slightly hazy and blurred, whether it was two feet away from me or on the horizon. Was starting to get a bit worried about this as my right eye was sharp and clear.

The eye patches you sleep in are actually fine. What is a bit of a pain is tearing the micropore tape used to attach them off your face first thing in the morning. Ouchy. Given you cannot really wash your face properly (no water in eye, y'see), you get an accumulation of ex-micropore adhesive which is difficult to remove.

Eyes occasionally feel "gritty", but not much, and it soon goes away.

### **Monday**

Left eye still fuzzy. Really worried now. The difference between the two eyes is starting to make me feel disorientated. Left eye now aching.

### **Tuesday**

Wake up first thing in the morning and left eye has improved vastly overnight in clarity. Disorientation goes, and I'm much happier. Right eye has decided to be the achey one today. Both eyes pin-sharp until about midday when intermittent fuzziness started in the RIGHT eye. Grrr.

### **Wednesday**

Left eye sharp and clear (however aching), right eye now fuzzy. Ok, I'm getting used to this now. They are going to move around loads, be intermittently fuzzy and clear, and achey and not achey, and day to day movements are really to be ignored for at least the first week to two weeks.

### **Thursday**

BOTH eyes slightly hazy. However...

Back to clinic today for 1 week checkup. No infection, no inflammation, tears back to normal. Vision between 20/10 and 20/15 in left eye, 20/10 in right eye, composite confident 20/10 (i.e. 2 lines below (i.e. better than) the "normal" sight and 4 lines below the driving standard).

Cleared to drive, cleared to climb, stop eye drops. Continue sleeping in eye patches for another week, don't get water in eyes for another week. Come back in a month. Still healing so still be expected to move around, and should definitely get a lot sharper and clearer. Vision is still slightly hazy, and he said that would be expected to clear up over time.

Night vision should finally settle after about eight weeks, day vision should finally settle after about a month.

### **Overall views of the whole experience**

#### *Their's*

They are really, really pleased. I am, apparently, well above what they would aim for both in terms of visual acuity and speed of healing. For some reason, to be back to "normal" tear levels in a week is going some. In terms of visual acuity a test showed that I am at absolute BCVA - i.e there is no way that my vision can be made any better in terms of focus, though clarity would be expected to get better over time. From -6.0 to where I am now is apparently quite impressive.

#### *Mine*

Still work in progress. The thing is, they know what to expect as the eyes heal over time, I don't, and they are MY eyes. So I'm more cautious.

#### *The good:*

Visual Acuity is EXCELLENT. 20/10 is at least or even slightly better than I had with contacts or glasses. Compared to how I was the difference is massive. Basically I have better than (in fact almost double) "normal" sight without any visual aid.

#### *The bad:*

Not much really.

#### *The "Jury Is Still Out":*

**Clarity:** I will be a lot happier when the intermittent fuzziness goes. I know it is temporary as there have been days where both eyes have been clear and pin-sharp (that was the day they both were aching!), but I will be happier when it settles down.

**Night Vision:** Roughly, I reckon I am more or less where I was with contacts, at present. This would be expected to get better - a lot better. He reckoned eight weeks before night vision settles, but a friend who had exactly the same treatment as me (Michaela) said that the night vision was still slowly getting better six months afterwards.

#### *The Right Pain In The Neck*

Sleeping in eye patches, eye drops, not being able to have a proper shower, not being able to rub my eyes. All of which are temporary but are a bit of a pain.

### **The "Was It Worth it and Would I Recommend It"?**

Yes, should have had it done ages ago. Three grand well spent, especially with the interest-free option. I would point out that the "normal" treatment is £1,000 per eye, and the "wavefront" treatment is £1,500 per eye. Yes I would (and have) recommended it to several people already. And obviously anyone thinking of having it done is more than welcome to grill me on my experience and have a good look at the literature I've got.