



AVASTIN™ (BEVACIZUMAB) INTRAVITREAL INJECTION

Contacts: Eye Clinic 4379075 (8.30am – 5pm Mon – Friday)

After hour phone numbers will be given at time of injection

This information leaflet is designed to help you understand about Avastin

EYE CONDITIONS THAT MAY BENEFIT FROM AVASTIN INJECTION

Age-related Macular Degeneration (ARMD or AMD) is the leading cause of blindness in people over 50 years of age. It is caused by the breakdown of the central portion of the retina (the nerve layer of the part of your eye) called the macula. The macula is responsible for the fine central vision in the eye that is needed for driving a car, reading fine print, recognizing faces etc.

There are two types of Macular Degeneration: dry and wet. In the “**wet**” **form of ARMD**, abnormal blood vessels grow in the back of the eye. Sometimes these vessels leak blood or fluid that causes blurred or distorted vision. There are other similar eye conditions that cause loss of central vision due to abnormal growth of blood vessels in the back of the eye. These can occur even in young patients, and include conditions such as High Myopia (near sightedness), Diabetes and eye injury. Sometimes there is no known reason for the abnormal blood vessels. **Without treatment, vision loss may be quick and severe.**

Macular Oedema or swelling around the macula that affects vision but does not respond adequately to the usual treatment methods. It can occur with conditions such as Central Retinal Vein Occlusion, Diabetic Retinopathy, Uveitis (inflammation of the eyes) and others. Without effective treatment, vision loss could progress and become permanent.

WHAT DOES “OFF LABEL” MEAN?

Avastin was not initially developed to treat your eye condition. Based upon the results of clinical trials that demonstrated its safety and effectiveness, Avastin was approved by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) in the USA for the treatment of metastatic colorectal cancer.

As a condition of approval, the manufacturer produced a “label” explaining the indications, risks and benefits. The label explains that Avastin works by blocking a substance known as vascular endothelial growth factor (VEGF). Blocking or inhibiting VEGF helps prevent further growth of the blood vessels that the cancer needs to continue growing.

HOW DOES IT WORK IN THE EYE?

Ophthalmologists are using Avastin “Off Label” to treat eye diseases such as Diabetic Retinopathy, Retinal Vein Occlusion and Wet-Aged Macular Degeneration since research indicated that VEGF is one of the causes for the growth of the abnormal blood vessels. By blocking the stimulus it can stop the blood vessels leaking and growing. In some cases it actually causes the blood vessels to regress.

WHAT ARE THE LIMITATIONS?

Although some patients have regained vision, the medication may not restore vision that has already been lost and may not ultimately prevent further loss of vision caused by the disease. Once a scar forms, we are unable to restore the vision and prevent further vision loss.

ARE THERE ALTERNATIVES?

You do not have to receive treatment for your condition, although without treatment, these diseases can lead to further vision loss and blindness, sometimes very quickly. Other forms of treatment are available.

At present there is another approved treatment for Neovascular Age-related Macular Degeneration: Photodynamic Laser Therapy with a drug called Visudyne although this treatment has been proven to slow down the rate of visual loss, most people do not get back better vision.

There is another Anti-VEGF agent available (Lucentis). It was specifically developed for this purpose by the same company (Gentec). It's cost is around \$2850 per dose. It has been subjected to the largest number of scientific trials. It theoretically has less chance of having some side effects. If you would prefer this treatment, please let us know so that we can arrange it.

HOW IS THE TREATMENT GIVEN?

Avastin is given by an intra-vitreous injection. The drug is injected by an Ophthalmologist into the vitreous gel, which is the jelly-like substance in the back chamber of your eye.

- This is a sterile procedure that takes place in our rooms
- Local anaesthetic drops are used to numb the eye before the procedure. Most patients experience minimal or no pain after the procedure
- Very few experience a short duration of eye ache and/or very temporary loss of vision due to increased fluid and therefore pressure in the eye
- This injection is usually given 4 weeks apart for 3 months
- An OCT and review of the Macula will be undertaken at 4 months. At this stage a decision will be made if further injections are required

WHAT ARE THE RISKS WHEN IT IS GIVEN TO ME IN THE EYE?

Ophthalmologists believe that the risk of complications is very low. Patient receiving Avastin for eye conditions are healthier than the cancer patients and receive a significantly smaller dose (2.5mg/0.1ml) delivered only to the cavity of their eye.

However the benefits and risks of intravitreal Avastin for eye conditions are not fully known. In addition whenever a medication is used in a large number of patients, a small number of coincidental life-threatening problems may occur that have no relationship to the treatment. For example elderly patients are already at increased risk for heart attacks and strokes. If one of these patients treated with Avastin suffers a heart attack or stroke, it may not be caused by the Avastin treatment.

POST INJECTION ADVICE

- Your eye that received the injection should have minimal or no discomfort. It may however be slightly bloodshot from the injection given to you.

YOU SHOULD REPORT TO US IMMEDIATELY IF YOU DEVELOP

- Pain
- Blurry, misty or decreased vision
- Redness of the eye (compared to immediately after the injection)
- Thick discharge from the eye
- Excessive sensitivity to light
- Hazy or blurred vision due to inflammation or haemorrhage

Phone: Numbers will be given at time of Injection.

If you cannot make contact with us:-

IMMEDIATELY CONTACT YOUR GP OR GO TO ACCIDENT AND EMERGENCY AT THE WHANGAREI HOSPITAL IF YOU EXPERIENCE

- Abdominal pain associated with constipation and vomiting
- Abnormal bleeding
- Chest pain
- Severe headache
- Slurred speech or weakness on one side of the body

As soon as possible, notify Dr Dalziel's private surgery.

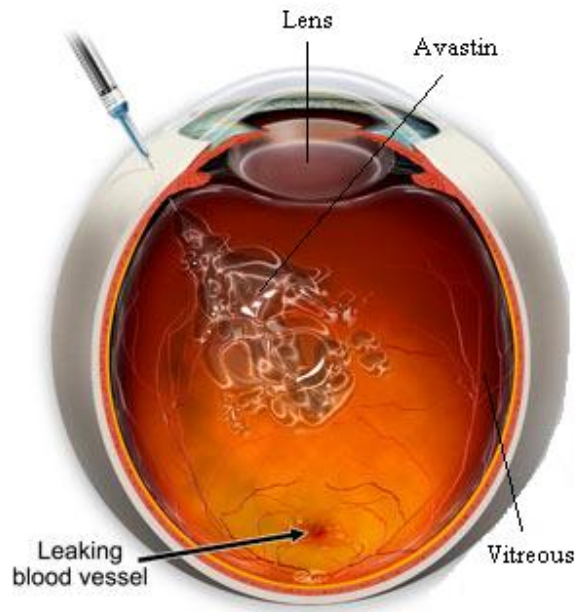
POSSIBLE RISKS OF THE INTRAVITREAL INJECTION

Serious complications are rare but may lead to severe, permanent loss of vision.

- The possibility of an eye infection (endophthalmitis)
- Glaucoma (increased pressure in the eye)
- Cataract formation (blurred vision due to clouding of the lens of the eye)
- Retinal detachment (floaters, shadow, reduced vision)
- Allergic Reaction - Any medication has the potential to cause allergic reactions in a small number of people. Symptoms of an allergic reaction can include a rash, hives, itching, shortness of breath and very rarely – death. If you have allergies to medicines, foods or other things in the environment, or if you have asthma, you should let your doctor know.

Your condition may not get better or may become worse. Any or all of these complications may cause decreased vision and/or have a possibility of causing blindness. Additional procedures may be needed to treat these complications. During the follow up visits you will be checked for possible side effects and the results will be discussed with you.

- You may experience black blobs (floaters) which should disappear by the next day
- Do not rub your eye or press on it
- Do not drive for 24 hours



Cost: \$780 per injection

Please note: Usually patients will require a minimum of three injection treatments. Some patients will require more depending on response or relapse. An OCT will be used to monitor progress.