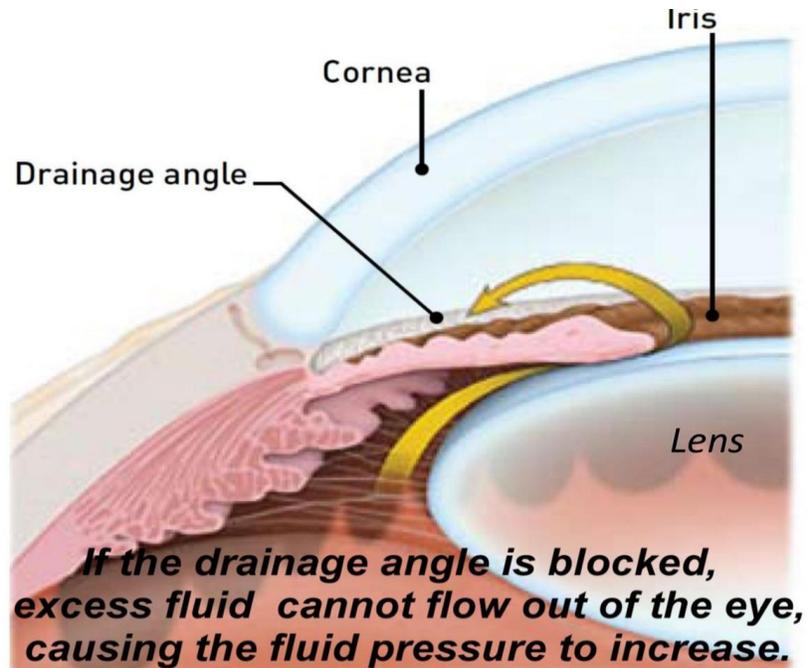


## LASER IRIDOTOMY & CLOSED-ANGLE GLAUCOMA

A Laser iridotomy is a surgical procedure used to treat closed-angle glaucoma. The laser procedure is also performed on patients who are at risk for developing closed-angle glaucoma.

### **WHAT IS CLOSED-ANGLE GLAUCOMA?**

Like all forms of glaucoma, closed-angle glaucoma has to do with elevated pressure inside the eye. A normal eye constantly produces a clear liquid, called aqueous, which flows towards the front of the eye. An equal amount of this fluid flows out of the front part of the eye through a tiny drainage system (called the drainage angle), thereby maintaining a constant pressure in the eye.



In open-angle glaucoma, the most common type of glaucoma, fluid drains too slowly from the eye causing a gradual rise in eye pressure. In contrast, closed angle glaucoma can cause a sudden rise in eye pressure. In closed-angle glaucoma, the drainage angle is blocked by the iris (the colored part of the eye) pressing against it. The iris may completely block the flow of the aqueous fluid. The pressure inside the eye can rise very quickly and dramatically, causing an acute closed-angle glaucoma attack. Symptoms of an acute closed-angle glaucoma attack include: *severe ocular pain, redness, decreased vision, colored halos, headache, nausea and vomiting.*

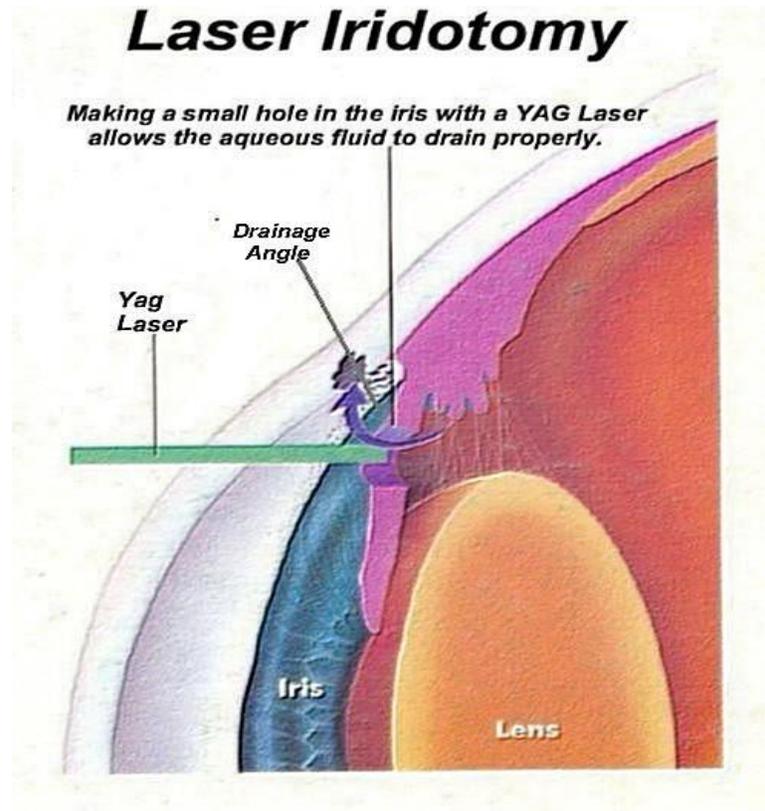
Because very elevated eye pressure can rapidly damage the optic nerve and lead to loss of vision, a closed-angle glaucoma attack must be treated as an emergency.

Unfortunately, individuals at risk for developing closed-angle glaucoma often have few or no symptoms prior to the attack. Early symptoms in people at risk for closed-angle glaucoma may include blurred vision, halos in their vision, headache, mild eye pain or redness. People who are at risk for developing closed-angle glaucoma should have a laser iridotomy. Many common medications, including over-the-counter cold medications and sleeping pills, should be avoided until after the laser procedure is completed. If one eye has an attack of angle closure glaucoma, the other eye is also at risk and needs treatment.

### **WHAT HAPPENS DURING LASER IRIDOTOMY?**

Using a laser, a small hole is made in the iris permitting the aqueous fluid to enter the drainage angle. This allows the iris to return to its normal position, restoring the balance between fluid entering and leaving the eye. The procedure is performed in the office and is painless.

About an hour before the procedure, pilocarpine drops are instilled in the eye to constrict the pupil. Before starting the procedure, the eye is numbed with an eye drop. A contact lens is then placed on the eye. A small hole is made in the iris. It is concealed from view by the upper eyelid. The actual procedure only takes a minute.



### **ARE THERE ANY RISKS OR SIDE EFFECTS?**

Real complications from a laser iridotomy are almost nonexistent. The eye drops used before the procedure can blur the vision for a few hours. It is possible for the contact lens to scratch the cornea, but this resolves within a day.