

# Having a fundus fluorescein angiography

You have been given this leaflet because your ophthalmologist (eye doctor) would like you to have a test called a fundus fluorescein angiography to investigate your eye condition. The leaflet explains the benefits, risks and alternatives, as well as what you can expect when you come to hospital. If you have any further questions, please speak to a doctor or nurse caring for you.

## What is a fundus fluorescein angiography?

Fundus fluorescein angiography is a common procedure that is performed to give your doctor more information about the condition of the back of your eye. A small amount of yellow fluorescein dye will be injected into a vein in your arm. The dye travels to your eye where it highlights the blood vessels. It is particularly useful in showing leaking blood vessels and highlighting where the blood supply at the back of the eye is poor. Photographs will then be taken of the eye.

The test takes place in the Ophthalmology (Eye) Department at St Thomas' Hospital and lasts between 10 and 15 minutes. The results will help your ophthalmologist to decide the best way to treat your eye condition.

It is carried out in the ophthalmology department at St Thomas' Hospital.

The use of fluorescein in this test is 'unlicensed'. This means that although the manufacturer of the medicine has not specified it can be used in this way, there is evidence that it works. This is why it is important for you to read **Unlicensed medicines – a guide for patients**, which has more information about this subject. There is also further information in the manufacturer's leaflet. Alternatively, you can call the pharmacy medicines helpline – contact details are at the end of this leaflet.

## Why should I have a fundus fluorescein angiography?

This test will give your eye doctor important information to help understand your eye condition and plan how to treat it.

## What will happen if I choose not to have the test?

Your doctor has decided that a fundus fluorescein angiography is the best way to get a detailed picture of the condition of your eyes. If you do not wish to have the test, we may not be able to monitor the condition of your eyes with as much accuracy as we can when a fundus fluorescein angiography is done. You will not however be treated any differently by your doctor should you decide not to have the test.

## Giving my consent (permission)

We want to involve you in all the decisions about your care and treatment. If you decide to go ahead with the test, you will be asked to sign a consent form that says you have agreed to the treatment and that you understand the benefits, risks and alternatives. If there is anything you don't understand or you need more time to think about it, please tell the staff caring for you.

Remember, it is your decision. You can change your mind at any time, even if you have signed the consent form. Let staff know immediately if you change your mind. Your wishes will be respected at all times. If you would like to read our consent policy, please tell a member of staff. Please ask for a copy of this form should you wish to keep one.

## What happens before the procedure?

You will have eye drops put in to dilate your pupils (make them bigger). You will need to remove your contact lenses before the drops are put in, so please bring your glasses with you. The drops will give us a clearer view of the retina at the back of the eye (also known as the fundus). You will also be asked a few questions about your general health.

**It is important that you let us know if you have any allergies or if you have had an unexpected reaction to fluorescein dye before.**

## What happens during the procedure?

A small tube will be placed into a vein in your arm. This is called an intravenous cannula. The fluorescein dye will then be injected through this into the blood stream. Within seconds, the dye travels through the blood vessels to reach your eye.

A series of rapid photographs will then be taken and it is important that you keep as still as possible at this stage. The nurse may help you to keep your eyes open by gently holding your eye lids. You will then be asked to sit back for a few minutes to rest before a further series of photos are taken. The test should take no longer than 15 minutes to complete.

Please tell the nurse if you feel unwell at any point. It is common to feel slightly nauseous as the dye goes in, but this passes quickly. Taking deep breaths often helps.

## What are the side effects of FFA?

After the injection of fluorescein dye, your skin and your urine will turn yellow for approximately 24–48 hours. This is normal and is not harmful and you should not be worried by this. Drinking plenty of water afterwards can help flush the dye through your system.

Some of the other more common side effects (affecting approximately five people out of a 100) include:

- **feeling nauseous or being sick** – this usually occurs in the first 1–2 minutes after you are given the injection and in most cases it will pass within seconds. Taking deep breaths often helps.
- **a rash, itching or tingling sensation to your skin** (your doctor may prescribe you an antihistamine to help reduce the itching).

Very rarely, if the tube becomes displaced and dye leaks into the skin surrounding the tube, you may experience a burning sensation. If this occurs, the injection will be stopped and burning should resolve by itself within a few days.

Very rarely, people can have a serious allergic reaction (anaphylaxis) to the fluorescein dye causing breathing or circulatory difficulties. We are equipped to deal with this emergency and if it happens the emergency medical team will be contacted.

**This is why it is important for you to tell us before the procedure if you have had a reaction to fluorescein in the past.**

## What happens after the procedure?

You will be asked to stay in the department for approximately 30 minutes after the test so that you can be observed for any late side effects. The cannula will then be removed before you go home.

As your pupils will still be dilated (bigger than usual), your eyes will be very sensitive to sunlight for at least two hours. It is advisable to wear sunglasses or a hat to reduce the discomfort.

You must not drive for at least 2 hours after the procedure or until your pupils return to their normal size. You are advised to bring someone with you to help you get home.

## How will I find out the results?

Your doctor may be able to give you the results of the test on the same day, or we may wish to make another appointment for you to come and discuss your fundus fluorescein angiography result at a later date.

### Contact us

If you would like more advice or information about your fundus fluorescein angiography, please contact the nurses in the Nettleship clinic at St Thomas' on 020 7188 4307.

If you are in serious pain at any time, or the discomfort continues for more than three days, please seek medical advice from your GP.

### Pharmacy medicines helpline

For information about any medicines that you have been prescribed at Guy's and St Thomas' hospitals, you can speak to the staff caring for you or call our helpline.

**t:** 020 7188 8748 9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday

### Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

To make comments or raise concerns about the Trust's services, please contact PALS. Ask a member of staff to direct you to the PALS office or:

**e:** 020 7188 8801 at St Thomas'

**t:** 020 7188 8803 at Guy's

**e:** [pals@gstt.nhs.uk](mailto:pals@gstt.nhs.uk)

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