New Surgical Procedure For Glaucoma Patients

Pikes Peak Regional Hospital, in conjunction with Colorado Eye Institute, is now offering Micro-Invasive Glaucoma Surgery, or MIGS to glaucoma patients who are considering cataract surgery. PPRH is one of only a handful of facilities in Colorado performing this surgery.

Using a new microstent, roughly the size an eyelash, the surgeon places the microstent into the eye drainage system during cataract surgery. It acts as a kind of scaffolding that helps to open and enlarge the drainage system. In so doing, the stent helps to lower intraocular pressure. This innovative device is similar to the stents used for heart conditions such as coronary artery disease.

Because insertion of the device is done at the same time as cataract surgery, patients who need or want cataract surgery can have a combined cataract and glaucoma procedure. The cataract portion is performed to improve vision, and the microstent placement is performed to help control glaucoma. Insertion of the microstent generally adds only a few minutes to the surgery and is done when the cataract portion is completed. The microstent adds little overall risk to the procedure. Insertion of the microstent, however, can help greatly with the task of controlling eye pressure and thus controlling a patient’s glaucoma.

According to Dr. James Lee with Colorado Eye Institute, most patients with both cataracts and glaucoma are considered to be good candidates for this combined procedure. Dr. Lee is a board-certified, Ophthalmologist who specializes in the management of cataracts and patients who also suffer from glaucoma. He has been in practice for 14 years and has been performing surgery at PPRH for 4 years.

“The microstent provides patients with an opportunity to reduce the number of medications they use to manage their disease,” said Dr. Lee. “It also provides the opportunity to improve eye pressure without being subjected to an ever-increasing number of topical medications (eyedrops), each of which can have side effects for both their eyes and other organs such as the heart and lungs.”

Dr. Lee has been providing all glaucoma patients who are considering cataract surgery with more information on this exciting procedure. Eligible candidates have the choice of undergoing cataract surgery alone, or cataract surgery along with insertion of the microstent. The addition of the stent does not alter the success of cataract surgery, but it can dramatically help with management of glaucoma.

Sidebar

Glaucoma is a disease defined as optic nerve damage. The primary cause of this nerve damage is elevated pressure inside the eye (intraocular pressure). Damage to the optic nerve can lead to progressive sight loss over time. Over the past several decades in the United States, the use of surgery as a stand-alone procedure for treating glaucoma has given way to the use of medications (eyedrops) to treat the disease. The success of medications has improved dramatically, while standard glaucoma surgeries are still considered to be high-risk for sight-threatening complications.