

### **What are the three laser procedures optometrists are trained to perform?**

**1. YAG Capsulotomy (YAG)** - Common in-office procedure to open cloudy film (on lens capsule) after cataract surgery. While optometrists do not and will not perform cataract surgery, cloudiness of the capsule can happen months to years after cataract surgery requiring the use of the Nd: YAG laser to clear it up. This procedure takes less than 5 minutes, requires no sedation and only a dilating and numbing drop. It is a non-thermal (no burn) technique and the patient does not feel it.

**2. Laser Peripheral Iridotomy (LPI)** - Emergency sight-saving procedure to treat elevated pressure from an anatomy irregularity. The procedure creates an alternate channel for fluid to flow from where it is produced to where it drains. The procedure takes about 5 minutes, and requires only a pupil constricting and numbing drop. It is a non-thermal (no burn) technique and the patient does not feel it.

**3. Selective Laser Trabeculoplasty (SLT)** - Common in-office procedure to treat elevated pressure from glaucoma. Applied to the fluid drainage structures of the eye, it increases fluid outflow without damaging the tissue. This procedure takes less than 5 minutes, requires no sedation and only a pupil constricting and numbing drop. It is a non-thermal (no burn) technique and the patient does not feel it.

*\*After each of these procedures, the patient is asked to stay in the office for about 30 minutes so that eye pressure can be checked before they drive themselves home.*

**What about complications?** Complications have already been managed by optometrists for decades. Most of the complications involve pressure increases and inflammation that are managed by prescription drops, which are already prescribed daily by optometrists. The more serious complications, like retinal detachments, are incredibly rare and would be appropriately referred.

### **IMPORTANT CONSIDERATIONS**

-The laser is housed in the same type of microscope that optometrists use all day, every day to examine patients' eyes. The skill most needed to be able to perform these laser procedures is being able to focus the microscope, which optometrists do expertly.

-Optometrists provide more than 2/3 of all annual eye exams. It is during these examinations that conditions are found that would require treatment by laser. Optometrists already discuss the conditions with the patients, describe the treatments and take care of the patients post-procedures.

-Eight states have specific statutory authority for laser procedures in their Optometric Practice Acts (Virginia, Wyoming, Mississippi, Oklahoma, Kentucky, Louisiana, Alaska, Arkansas). Each state has set a safety precedent. With more than one hundred thousand procedures performed by optometrists, there have been extremely few unexpected complications, malpractice, or regulatory events.

-The 2021 DORA report states (page 28): "The General Assembly established the standardized national examinations and the Board as the arbiters of competence." Each of the eight states mentioned above has developed a regulatory framework to ensure competency for these procedures.

-Optometrists are not trained to perform LASIK or many other procedures. However, YAG capsulotomy, YAG LPI and SLT procedures are taught by ALL 24 optometry schools and tested on national board examinations.

-Lasers began to be used in the 1990s and are now commonly used by a range of health care professionals, including aestheticians, podiatrists, and dentists.