

# Cataracts

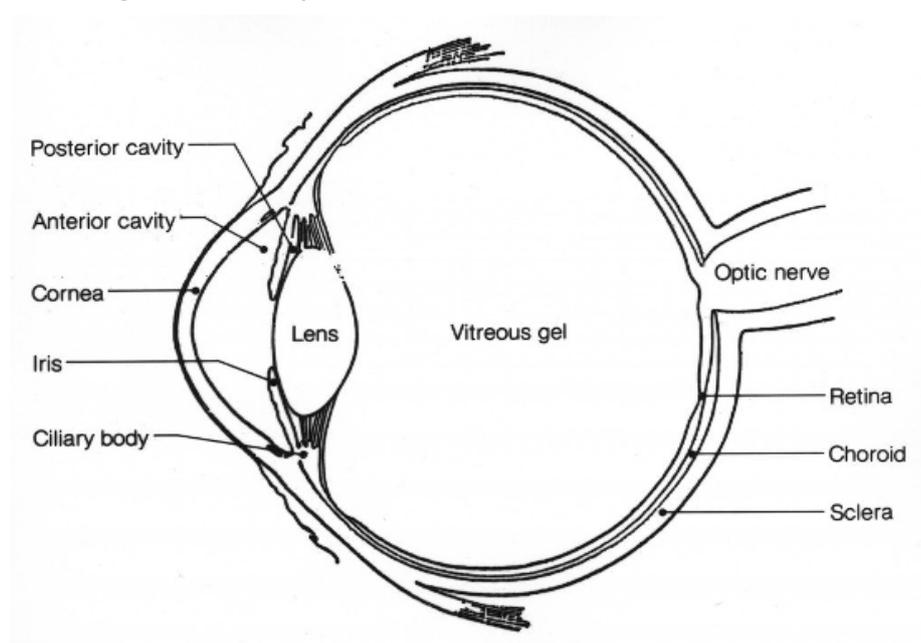
Ophthalmology

## About this leaflet

You have been given this leaflet because you have been diagnosed with a cataract in one or both eyes or may have been recommended by an eye doctor to have cataract surgery performed. This leaflet will give you information that you need to know about your cataract operation.

## What is a Cataract?

The eye works like a camera and just like a camera, the eye has a lens that focuses light on to a film (the retina). The lens is located near the front of the eye and is shown in the diagram below. Normally, the lens is clear which allows light to pass through it. When the lens becomes cloudy, light can no longer pass through it. A cloudy lens is called a cataract.



**The prevention of infection is a major priority in all healthcare and everyone has a part to play.**

- Please decontaminate your hands frequently for 20 seconds using soap and water or alcohol gel if available
- If you have symptoms of diarrhoea and/or vomiting, cough or other respiratory symptoms, a temperature or any loss of taste or smell please do not visit the hospital or any other care facility and seek advice from 111
- Keep the environment clean and tidy
- Let's work together to keep infections out of our hospitals and care homes.

## How does cataract affect your eyesight?

When a cataract develops, light can no longer reach the film (retina) clearly. This gives symptoms of blurred and dull vision. People with cataracts often describe their vision as if they are looking through frosted glass. Other symptoms described include glare, especially at night time, and loss of contrast. Rarely people get double vision when looking through the eye with the cataract. The tasks that people find difficult to do when they get cataracts include reading, watching TV, recognising faces, driving at night or difficult conditions, tired eyes or headaches and judging shades and colours.

## How does a cataract develop?

Cataracts are very common. The most common cause of cataract is age. Most people who develop cataracts are over 60 years of age. It usually develops slowly but in some cases it can develop more rapidly. Children and younger adults can also develop cataracts from other causes such as genetic abnormalities, eye trauma, certain types of medication or medical conditions, such as diabetes.

## How is cataract diagnosed?

Cataract is diagnosed by performing a full eye examination using a slit lamp. It is important to check that the blurred vision is due to a cataract and not something else in the eye. In order not to miss any other condition in the eye, it is important to perform a full eye examination with eye drops to dilate the pupils to get a good view of the back of the eye. For this reason it is important not to drive after your hospital appointment.

## What does cataract surgery involve?

Cataract surgery involves removing the lens inside your eye and replacing it with a clear lens implant. It is one of the most commonly performed operations in a hospital because cataract is a very common condition. It is usually performed under local anaesthesia where the eye is made numb but you will be awake for the operation. Most patients tolerate this very well. Standard cataract surgery takes approximately 20 minutes, but you will most likely be in hospital for half a day while we prepare you with dilating drops and perform checks before and after the operation. There is normally no need to stay in hospital overnight after cataract surgery.

## When will my cataract be ready or ripe enough for surgery?

The decision to proceed with surgery depends on how advanced the cataract is and how much it is affecting your eyesight and your ability to perform visual tasks, and also whether you are keen to have surgery. Some people who have very minimal cataract and not much blurring of vision may prefer to wait longer. Most people who decide to go ahead with cataract surgery are below the visual standard recommended by DVLA for driving.

## Consent

We must seek your consent for any procedure or treatment beforehand. Your doctor will explain the risks, benefits, and alternatives where relevant before they ask for your consent. If you are unsure about any aspect of the procedure or treatment proposed, please do not hesitate to ask for more information.

## What are the benefits of having cataract surgery?

Cataract surgery is highly successful in improving vision in the majority of people, but as with all procedures, there are risks.

## Are there any risks?

Cataract surgery is a very safe operation but as with all types of surgery, cataract surgery has risks, but serious risks are a rare occurrence. In general, 97% of people are pleased with the outcome of cataract surgery.

The most common and serious risks are listed below. Your ophthalmologist will discuss this with you in more detail at your clinic appointment.

- 1 in 10 risk of the lens capsule becoming cloudy. This risk is common but can be easily rectified by a simple laser procedure.
- 1 in 100 risk of prolonged inflammation. This is normally mild and can be treated with a prolonged course of eye drops, rarely eye injections may be required should the inflammation be extensive or affect the back of the eye (retina)
- 1 in 200 risk of break in the lens capsule. If this occurs then the surgery can take longer to complete and you may need to have another operation several weeks later. The recovery can take longer than a standard procedure and more frequent hospital visits and medication may be required.
- 1 in 1000 risk of infection. This is called endophthalmitis and can cause permanent damage to the vision. Intensive treatment is required should this occur
- 1 in 2000 risk of high pressure or bleeding during surgery. This may cause permanent damage to the vision, but fortunately this risk is very rare.

As mentioned before, cataract surgery is a safe procedure and the risks are very low with most people having no risks at all.

## Can I have any other treatment for cataracts?

Unfortunately, there is no other treatment available for cataracts. Cataract surgery is the only way to improve vision once a cataract has developed.

## I want to be 'asleep' during the operation. Can I have sedation or a general anaesthetic?

Over 95% of all cataract operations are performed under local anaesthetic, where you will be awake for the operation but the eye will be numb. The vast majority of patients have a really good experience and choose to have local anaesthetic again for the second eye operation. We recommend local anaesthesia in the majority of cases as this has far less risk than a general anaesthetic (where patients are put to sleep). We perform a small number of cataract operations under general anaesthesia only if the patient has difficulty keeping still because of reduced mental capacity, involuntary tremor or severe back pain when lying down. This decision will be made at your clinic appointment.

## Who will perform my operation?

The surgical team includes the staff on the ward as well as in the operating theatre. In the operating theatre the team will consist of nurses, surgeons, anaesthetists and operating department assistants. As all of our NHS hospitals are teaching hospitals, we have a duty to train future surgeons to operate. Your surgery may not be performed by a consultant but there will always be an experienced surgeon either performing or supervising your operation by a training surgeon to ensure it goes smoothly.

## Will I need spectacles after cataract surgery?

Cataract surgery involves removing your own lens inside the eye and replacing it with a clear transparent synthetic lens implant. It is recommended practice to choose a lens implant that allows you to focus clearly for the distance so you will not need strong prescription glasses for distance. Many people find that they don't need spectacles for distance at all after their surgery, but this cannot be guaranteed. If you have astigmatism or require prisms in your spectacles before surgery, it is likely that you will need distance spectacles to see clearly after cataract surgery.

Because a standard lens implant (monofocal lens) can only focus at one length (usually, in the distance) almost everyone will need spectacles for reading and intermediate visual tasks, such as using a computer, after cataract surgery. After surgery, some people choose to have two separate pairs of spectacles and some opt for one pair with varifocal or bifocal lenses.

The vast majority of patients achieve very good vision with a little help from spectacles for distance visual and reading activities.

## What is a multifocal lens?

A multifocal lens aims to correct vision for both distance and near, with the aim of being spectacle free. These are not available on the NHS but are available privately. If you wish to explore this further, then you will need to be referred to a surgeon in the private sector for this.

## What is a toric lens?

If you have a high degree of astigmatism, your doctor may discuss with you the option of using a special type of lens implant called a toric implant, to reduce the amount of astigmatism you have. This is sometimes available on the NHS but the surgery and post-operative recovery is more complex than when a standard monofocal lens implant is used. If a toric lens may be suitable for you, your doctor will discuss this with you at your preoperative clinic appointment.

## I only have cataract in one eye- will I need spectacles afterwards?

If you only need cataract surgery in one eye for the foreseeable future, we may recommend matching the two eyes. For example, if someone is short-sighted in both eyes and is having surgery only to the right eye, we may choose a lens implant that will result in the right eye remaining short sighted so that both eyes are balanced and will need the same amount of spectacle prescription after surgery. This is because if the two eyes are not matched, double vision may be experienced. This will be discussed with you at your clinic appointment, if applicable.

## Will my cataract grow back?

Cataracts do not grow back and you only need to have surgery once. However, the posterior capsule behind the lens implant can go cloudy after cataract surgery and a simple laser procedure is performed to clear it and restore vision. This happens in approximately 10% of cases.

## What happens after I choose to have cataract surgery?

After you have understood the risks and benefits and decide to proceed with surgery, the doctor will ask you to sign the first stage of the consent form. You will be given this leaflet and other information. We will then place you on the waiting list for surgery. The waiting time is variable, therefore please ask your doctor for an estimate at the time you are listed. You can change your mind at any time prior to surgery if you are unsure of your decision.

Prior to the date of surgery, you will be asked to visit the hospital for a pre operative visit. At this visit, we take measurements of your eye and we perform checks on your overall suitability for surgery. If we find a significant problem e.g. poorly controlled blood pressure or diabetes, we may not place you on the waiting list until your GP has improved your health in order to minimise the risks of cataract surgery.

If you normally wear soft contact lenses, you should not wear these for 1 week prior to this pre operative visit. If you normally wear hard contact lenses, you should not wear these for 6 weeks prior to this pre operative visit. This is because contact lenses can affect the measurements we take of your eye.

**It is very important to tell us if you have had laser eye surgery previously. This is because the measurements we take may be inaccurate and further tests and calculations may be required to prevent you from becoming too short sighted or long sighted after surgery.**

## I have received a date for my cataract surgery but I can't make it.

If you cannot make the date of surgery given to you, then contact us on 01902 695815 to rearrange a date suitable for you.

## I have waited a long time for my surgery and still have not heard from the hospital

Our waiting list is variable and can be several months long due to the large volume of people that require this surgery, as cataract is a common condition. A delay in cataract surgery does not affect the final visual outcome. If you have not received any information by 6 months of placing you on the waiting list, please contact us on 01902 695815.

## What happens on the day of cataract surgery?

You will be admitted onto the day ward and checks will be performed by nurses and eye drops will be inserted to dilate your pupil. A doctor will also see you before the surgery to mark your eye, perform additional checks and confirm your consent for the operation. In total you may be in the hospital for approximately 5 hours. The time inside the operating theatre is about 30 minutes.

## What happens during the operation?

Once all the checks have been performed on the ward, you will be taken to the anaesthetic room where the anaesthesia will be administered. With local anaesthesia, the eye will be numbed with anaesthetic eye drops first then local anaesthetic solution may be used as well using an injection. There is very little or no pain during the administration of the local anaesthetic and it continues to numb the eye completely for the duration of the operation.

If you are having a general anaesthetic, your anaesthetist will discuss this with you in more detail.

Once your eye is numb, you will be taken into the operating theatre. You will need to lie flat for the duration of the operation, so please tell us at your preoperative assessment if you are unable to lie flat.

Your eye will be cleaned and a drape will be placed over your eye and your face to keep the area sterile. If you are claustrophobic, please inform us at your preoperative visit so we can arrange for a clear drape to be used. During the operation, you will see a bright light and shadows, but you will not see detail. You will hear 'buzzing' sounds and beeps intermittently and you may hear staff members talking as well. It is important that you do not talk or move during the operation to ensure the operation goes smoothly. You may also feel water at the side of your face, but we will do our best to prevent this from happening. The operation usually takes approximately 20 -30 minutes to complete and most people tolerate this very well. Your eye will be covered with a dressing after the operation.

## What happens after the operation?

When you return to the ward after your surgery, we will perform some additional checks and you will be given some eye drops and instructions on how to insert the drops in yourself for six weeks. It is advisable that you have someone take you home after the operation, as you will have a patch covering your eye.

You will receive an appointment for post operative clinic at 4 to 6 weeks after your cataract operation. During this check up visit, we may recommend surgery for your other eye if needed. We will insert dilating drops into your eye at this visit, so it is important not to drive after this clinic appointment.

## When can I drive after surgery?

We will advise you at your postoperative visit 4-6 weeks after surgery, if it is safe for you to drive.

## When can I go for new spectacles after surgery?

If your surgery has gone well, it is recommended that you obtain your final spectacles about 2 months after cataract surgery. We will advise you at your postoperative visit.

## How to make a complaint

If you wish to make a complaint, please write to us and let us know or contact the PALS service cross hospital. Our address is:

Ophthalmology manager, Directorate of Ophthalmology, A33, New Cross Hospital, Wolverhampton, WV10 0QP.

## How to give feedback

If you would like to give us feedback about your experience, please write a brief letter and send it to us by post. Please include your name, address and date of birth so we know who you are.

## Contact Information

### **Eye Referral Unit**

01902 695805

Mon – Fri 0800 – 1700 hours

Weekends 0800 – 1500 hours

### **Minor Procedures**

01902 695831

Mon – Fri 0830 – 1700 hours

### **Mary Jones Ward**

01902 695801

Mon – Fri 0700 – 1930 hours

Outside of these hours, please attend the main Emergency Department or contact NHS Direct on telephone number 111.

## English

If you need information in another way like easy read or a different language please let us know.

If you need an interpreter or assistance please let us know.

## Lithuanian

Jeigu norėtumėte, kad informacija jums būtų pateikta kitu būdu, pavyzdžiui, supaprastinta forma ar kita kalba, prašome mums apie tai pranešti.

Jeigu jums reikia vertėjo ar kitos pagalbos, prašome mums apie tai pranešti.

## Polish

Jeżeli chcieliby Państwo otrzymać te informacje w innej postaci, na przykład w wersji łatwej do czytania lub w innym języku, prosimy powiedzieć nam o tym.

Prosimy poinformować nas również, jeżeli potrzebowaliby Państwo usługi tłumaczenia ustnego lub innej pomocy.

## Punjabi

ਜੇ ਤੁਹਾਨੂੰ ਇਹ ਜਾਣਕਾਰੀ ਕਿਸੇ ਹੋਰ ਰੂਪ ਵਿਚ, ਜਿਵੇਂ ਪੜ੍ਹਨ ਵਿਚ ਆਸਾਨ ਰੂਪ ਜਾਂ ਕਿਸੇ ਦੂਜੀ ਭਾਸ਼ਾ ਵਿਚ, ਚਾਹੀਦੀ ਹੈ ਤਾਂ ਕਿਰਪਾ ਕਰਕੇ ਸਾਨੂੰ ਦੱਸੋ।

ਜੇ ਤੁਹਾਨੂੰ ਦੁਭਾਸ਼ੀਏ ਦੀ ਜਾਂ ਸਹਾਇਤਾ ਦੀ ਲੋੜ ਹੈ ਤਾਂ ਕਿਰਪਾ ਕਰਕੇ ਸਾਨੂੰ ਦੱਸੋ।

## Romanian

Dacă aveți nevoie de informații în alt format, ca de exemplu caractere ușor de citit sau altă limbă, vă rugăm să ne informați.

Dacă aveți nevoie de un interpret sau de asistență, vă rugăm să ne informați.

## Traditional Chinese

如果您需要以其他方式了解信息，如易读或其他语种，请告诉我们。

如果您需要口译人员或帮助，请告诉我们。