

Cataract surgery

Information for patients, relatives and carers

This information sheet has been provided to help answer some of the questions you may have about your cataract operation.

Please bring this information sheet with you on the day of your operation.

Why do I need cataract surgery?

A cataract is a clouding of the natural lens of your eye and affects your eyesight. It can occur in most people as they age.

When the cataract has reached a stage where your vision is affected significantly, the only treatment option is cataract surgery.

An ophthalmic (eye) surgeon will carry out your operation. This is a doctor who has already spent several years training and has a lot of experience in treating eye problems. A doctor who is still in training may carry out part or all of your operation under the supervision of a more experienced surgeon.

What are the benefits of cataract surgery?

The main benefit is clearer sight and an improvement in your colour vision, as things will seem less yellow.

Most people find that their sight improves considerably after surgery and you may no longer need to wear glasses all the time.

You will need to get a new prescription for your glasses about six weeks after your operation, although in some cases, ready-made reading glasses of +2.00 or +3.00 diopetre may be adequate.

If you have another medical condition, such as diabetes, glaucoma or age-related macular degeneration, your vision may still be limited, even if the operation to remove the cataract is successful.

Please note that your vision may not be completely clear immediately after the operation, but may take up to four weeks and in some cases longer to improve.

Are there any risks associated with this operation?

Complications are rare and, in most cases, can be treated effectively with drops and / or additional surgery.

In a small number of patients, further surgery, or other treatment, may be necessary.

Very rarely (for about one in every 1,000 patients), complications can result in blindness.

Possible complications after the operation include:

- bruising of the eye or eyelids
- high pressure inside the eye, causing pain and blurred vision
- clouding of the cornea, causing blurred vision
- incorrect prescription strength of the lens implant, or movement of the implant from the correct position
- swelling of the retina (macular oedema), causing blurred vision
- detached retina (where the retina separates from the wall of the eye), which may require surgery
- infection in the eye
- allergy to the eye drops used after the operation
- capsule opacity, causing blurring of vision several months after surgery

Are there alternatives to this treatment?

Early cataracts are treated with glasses, but when they develop further, surgery is the only treatment.

Without the operation, your vision will gradually deteriorate further, but you are unlikely to have other problems.

Is there anything I should do to prepare for my operation?

Unless you have been told otherwise, please take all your usual medication on the day of surgery.

If you are having a local anaesthetic (which is the case for 95 per cent of patients), you can eat and drink as normal. If you are having sedation or a general anaesthetic, you will need to fast for six hours before your surgery.

What happens on the day of my operation?

On the day of your surgery, you will be asked to attend the day case unit on the 4th floor of the **Western Eye Hospital**.

If you are having a general anaesthetic, you will be asked to attend Alex Cross Ward on the 2nd floor at the Western Eye Hospital.

The nurses will check you in and carry out all the pre-operation tasks, including measuring your blood pressure and blood glucose level if you are diabetic. The nurse then gives you the eye drops to dilate (enlarge) your pupils ready for the surgery.

The surgical team will also see you before surgery to check everything is in order and answer any questions or queries that you may have.

When the time comes for your surgery, you will be taken to the operating theatre where we will check your details again.

The appropriate anaesthetic will then be given to you and we will carry out your surgery.

The operation takes about 30 minutes to complete. We will then take you back to the day case unit.

How will I feel after the operation?

You may notice a dull ache or bruising sensation around your eye after surgery. This usually settles over one to two days. Your eye may also be redder than usual after your surgery. This gradually settles over seven to ten days.

When can I go home?

Most patients go home the day of their surgery. You can go home once the nurses have checked you over and you have received your medications.

It is very rare that you would have to stay overnight in hospital, even if you are having a general anaesthetic.

On the day of your surgery, you can expect to be in the hospital for around four to five hours.

How do I care for my eye at home?

Immediately after your operation, a pad and/or shield will be put over your eye to protect it from any accidental rubbing or knocks.

You should remove the pad or shield the morning after your operation and, if necessary, clean your eyelids and the surrounding skin with a tissue or cotton wool dipped in clean, warm water.

If you notice increasing pain, redness or reduced vision following surgery, please contact us on the numbers below.

If you have any pain or discomfort during the evening after your operation, you should take a painkiller such as paracetamol every four to six hours.

It is normal for your eyes to feel itchy or sticky with some mild discomfort and watery discharge for a few days after your operation.

Eye drops

Please make sure that you use the eye drops prescribed by the doctor, as they will help to prevent infection and reduce irritation.

You should start using the drops the morning after your operation, following the instructions below:

1. Wash and dry your hands thoroughly before touching your eye or putting your drops in.
2. Tilt your head back, and using one finger, gently pull your lower eyelid down.
3. Keeping your head tilted, look up and gently squeeze the eye dropper until a drop falls inside the lower lid. If you did not feel the drop go in, try again. **Do not let the dropper touch the eye.**

Use the drops four times a day, or as prescribed. You may find it easier to remember if you put them in at the same times each day, such as at mealtimes. You should continue to use them for at least four weeks after your operation, or until your doctor tells you to stop.

	Eye medication	Right or Left eye		Use how many times a day?	Use for how many weeks?
		R	L		
		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		

Is there anything I need to avoid?

Be very careful for the next three weeks after your operation.

Do not:

- rub your eye
- let soap or shampoo get into your eyes. It might be safer to put your head back when washing your hair (or ask someone to help you) for the first two weeks after your operation
- drive until you are advised you can
- go to work for one week
- do any heavy housework or strenuous exercise, or go swimming
- knock your eye when putting on your glasses

Do:

- rest as much as possible
- read, write, watch television and use a computer
- bathe or shower as usual
- be careful going up or down stairs
- go out for walks, do light shopping and cooking
- wear the plastic shield at night for one week, using thin sticky tape or Cellotape to hold it in place
- use your old glasses if they help. You will need new lenses in your glasses when your eye has healed, four to six weeks after surgery
- wear ordinary sunglasses or your old glasses if your eyes are sensitive to bright light or windy weather

Useful contact numbers

If your eye becomes red or painful, or your vision gets worse, please contact:

Western Eye Hospital:

Eye emergency department **020 3312 3241 or 020 3312 6666** (evenings, weekends and public holidays)

Alex Cross Ward **020 3312 3227**

Outpatients **020 3312 3236**

Eye clinic at Charing Cross Hospital (9.00 to 17.00, Monday to Friday, except public holidays)

Nursing sisters **020 3311 1126**

Eye clinic **020 3311 1955**

Appointments office **020 8383 5000**

Will I need to visit the hospital again?

Yes. We will send you an appointment to attend the eye clinic one to four weeks after your operation.

At this appointment, we will tell you when to stop using your eye drops and when to go to the optician for new glasses.

Please contact the appointments office on **020 3313 5000** if you do not receive an appointment.

How can I make a comment about my treatment?

We aim to provide the best possible service and staff will be happy to answer any questions you may have. However, if your experience of our services does not meet your expectations and you would like to speak to someone other than staff caring for you, please contact the patient advice and liaison service (PALS) on **020 3312 7777 or 020 3313 0088**. You can also email PALS at **xxxx@xxxxxxxxxxx.uk**. The PALS team is able to listen to your concerns, suggestions or queries and is often able to help sort out problems on behalf of patients.

Alternatively, you may wish to express your concerns in writing to:

The chief executive
Imperial College Healthcare NHS Trust
Trust Headquarters
The Bays, South Wharf Road
London W2 1NY

Alternative formats

This information can be provided on request in large print, as a sound recording, in Braille, or in alternative languages. Please contact the communications team on **020 3312 5592**.