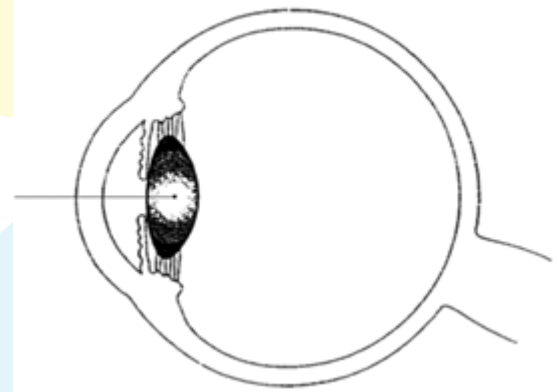


What you need to know about cataract surgery

What is a cataract?

Every human eye has a very small lens inside it, which focuses the light that enters the eye to create a clear, sharp image. When that lens becomes cloudy it is known as a cataract.

Cloudy lens inside the eye = cataract



One or both eyes may be affected and contrary to what you might have heard, a cataract is not a skin that grows over your eye.

As the cataract develops, it gradually restricts the amount of light entering the eye, and may cause:

- Blurred vision.
- Fading of colours.
- A change in your spectacle prescription.
- Visual problems dependent on lighting for example glare or halos.

What causes cataracts?

Most cataracts are the natural result of ageing, but they may occur in younger people due to many other reasons. Examples include:

- Trauma or surgery to the eye
- Diseases such as diabetes
- Prolonged inflammation of the eye

What is the treatment for cataracts?

The only proven treatment for cataracts is surgery, where the cloudy cataract lens is removed and replaced by a perfectly clear artificial lens, known as an 'intraocular lens implant,' allowing light to once again reach the back of the eye normally.

Cataracts can take many years to develop. Cataract surgery is generally considered only when the cataract has progressed to the point that your day-to-day activities are affected, otherwise there may be no benefit in having the surgery. It is not however, necessary to wait until a cataract is fully developed, or 'mature'.

There are rarely cases where insertion of an intraocular lens is not possible. In such cases contact lenses or glasses will be prescribed in order to correct your vision.

The pre-assessment clinic

At this clinic you will undergo all the tests necessary for our staff to gather the information needed for your surgery to go ahead. You will also be given a chance to ask any questions or raise any concerns that you may have. The clinic team will require information on your previous medical history, surgical history and current medication.

During your visit you will have eye drops instilled to make your pupils larger. This may cause your vision to become blurred and increase your sensitivity to bright lights. We advise that you bring a pair of sunglasses to your appointment to help with this. You are advised not to drive for several hours after your appointment; therefore you may wish to arrange for someone to accompany you.

A nurse will measure the strength of your spectacles as well as the length and curvature of your eyes. This information will be used to calculate the strength of the

artificial lens implant to be placed in your eye once the cataract has been removed. These tests are not painful and the nurse will explain what is happening at each stage.

Please feel free to ask questions at any time.

Before your operation

We take the risk of infection very seriously as any eye infection around the time of surgery can result in loss of vision. For this reason it is essential that you observe a strict personal hygiene regime to include the following:

- It is advisable that you wash your hands and face with anti-bacterial soap for 1 week prior to your operation to reduce the risk of infection.
- We recommend that you wash your hair and take a bath/shower the evening before surgery.
- Please ensure that clean clothes are worn on the day of surgery and that your footwear is also clean.
- We recommend that you wear a front opening shirt, blouse or dress that is loose fitting, for your comfort.
- If you normally wear contact lenses, please refrain from wearing them in the eye that will be operated on for a week before the surgery.
- Please refrain from wearing eye make-up for a week prior to the surgery and on the day please ensure all traces of make-up are removed prior to surgery.
- You should wear only minimal jewellery when you come to hospital.
- Please do not bring reusable handkerchiefs due to the infection risk that they create.

In order to reduce the risk of your operation being cancelled due to a condition called Blepharitis (a chronic inflammation affecting the edges of the eyelids, leading to a build-up of deposits on the skin and the eyelash margins), we would like you to perform the following lid hygiene for one week prior to your operation:

How to clean your eyelids using shampoo solution:

- Wash your hands thoroughly before and after cleaning your eyelids.
- Mix one teaspoonful of mild baby shampoo (any brand) into a mug full of boiled water that has cooled down. Commercially available lid shampoos are also available.
- Use a clean face cloth and dip in the solution. Put the cloth over your finger and gently scrub the edges of your eyelids and between your eyelashes to remove any crusting or scaly deposits.

- You must be careful not to touch your eye.
- Rinse your eyelids thoroughly after cleaning using cooled boiled water on a clean face cloth.

If in the days immediately before the planned surgery you are started on antibiotics by your GP or develop an infection anywhere in the body, such as:

- A cough, cold or runny nose
- A urinary tract infection
- Diarrhoea and vomiting
- A red or sticky eye
- An infected wound or skin infection (cellulitis)

Please contact us on the numbers at the end of this leaflet as we will not be able to proceed and will have to postpone your operation until the infection has resolved.

On the day of surgery

Most patients have cataract surgery as a day patient, but there are a few situations where the doctor would want you to stay in hospital overnight. You will be advised of this before your surgery.

If you are having a local anaesthetic you should eat and drink as normal. You should take all you prescribed medications as normal unless you have been told otherwise, or unless:

- You are on warfarin tablets please check your INR level at your anti-coagulant clinic 2 to 3 days prior to the surgery. Please note that if it is higher than the upper limit of your target range (usually 3) contact us immediately as we will not be able to proceed with your operation.

If you are having a local anaesthetic with sedation or a general anaesthetic you will be required to starve. Patients scheduled to undergo morning surgery should have nothing to eat or drink (including sweets or chewing gum) **after 2.00am. You may, however, have water up until 6.30am.**

Patients scheduled to undergo afternoon surgery should have nothing to eat or drink (including sweets or chewing gum) **after 7.30am. You may however have water up until 11.30am.**

Fasting instructions will be confirmed in the letter you will receive discussing your admission arrangements. Unless you are told otherwise by your pre-assessment nurse, you must take all your regular medication (with water) as prescribed.

Your operation

There will be a nurse with you throughout your operation to make sure you are comfortable. The operation is performed in the operating theatre and takes around 30 minutes.

Most patients having cataract removal have the operation under local anaesthetic, which involves either drops on the eye or drops in combination with a small amount of local anaesthetic that is squirted around the eye using a tiny blunt tube. Your eye may remain numb for 2-6 hours, which may affect your vision.

During the operation you will be asked to keep your head still and lie as flat as possible. A nurse will be with you holding your hand (if you wish) during the time you are having the anaesthetic and operation.

The operation will involve covering your other eye with a paper drape. If you have significant claustrophobia please let us know prior to coming in for your surgery.

The most common way to remove the cataract is by a technique called phacoemulsification. A small incision is made painlessly in the front of the eye and a tiny probe is passed through the incision. The probe breaks the cataract into very small pieces, which are then sucked out leaving the clear lens capsule.

A plastic lens is then folded and passed through the incision into the lens capsule where it unfolds to its normal shape. The small incision usually heals itself, although occasionally a stitch is required. After the operation a pad or clear shield will be placed over your eye.

Immediately after the operation your eye will look red and you will feel a gritty sensation. These symptoms are normal and can take up to 4 weeks to settle down.

The vast majority of patients experience little or no pain during or after the operation.

Following your operation

You will be transferred back to day surgery in your chair and will be given an information leaflet instructing you on the 'dos and don'ts' following your operation. It is advisable that you continue to use a bactericidal soap for 1 week after your operation to wash your hands and face to help prevent infection.

General Information

- After the operation we will advise you when you will be reviewed by a doctor or optometrist, depending on your surgeons' plan. This will usually be around 4 weeks after surgery but occasionally you may need to return to the hospital earlier and on more than one occasion.
- Paracetamol or your usual pain-relieving medication will relieve any mild discomfort during the first 24 hours after surgery. If your eye becomes progressively more red and painful or if your sight worsens rather than slowly improves after the operation, you must contact the hospital immediately. The numbers are given in the information leaflet that you will receive following surgery.
- Your sight will be checked at the post-operative appointment. You will then need to attend your own optometrist for new reading glasses or varifocals as required.
- Talk to your ophthalmologist about returning to work and driving following your operation.
- For at least two weeks after the surgery it is best not to travel abroad or plan a holiday in case you develop problems with the eye and need to be seen as an emergency.

Complications that may occur during or after cataract surgery

Cataract surgery is a very common operation that has a very good success rate, but like any operation, it carries risks. The cataract management team will take great care to limit the chance of these problems occurring. The commonest problem that occurs during cataract surgery is the lens capsule bag breaking.

In a recent national survey of modern cataract surgery this occurred in about 1 out of every 40 patients operated on. At the Manchester Royal Eye Hospital, this occurs less often: 1 out of every 90 operations in our most recent audit.

If the lens capsule bag breaks during the operation some of the cataract may float into the jelly at the back of the eye, and you may need to have a second operation.

The lens capsule bag supports the new lens implant. If the bag breaks, a different type of lens implant may be used, and stitches may be required. If this is the case, the operation will take longer and your eye will take a few weeks longer to recover, however the final visual result is usually the same.

The most serious sight-threatening problem that can happen during cataract surgery is bleeding inside the eye. Less than 1 patient in 1000 patients operated on will have this problem.

Complications that may occur shortly after surgery

The signs and symptoms of potential complications and the action you need to take will be explained to you during your visits to the hospital and in additional information leaflets that you will receive.

A serious problem that can occur after the operation is infection inside the eye. In order to prevent this happening antibiotic drops are normally given after the operation. Serious infections are rare, affecting less than 1 patient out of every 1000 operated on.

If this complication does occur, it can result in the loss of sight.

Other less serious problems that can occur after the operation are:

- Inflammation inside the eye
- A rise in pressure inside the eye
- A temporary clouding of the cornea (the transparent window at the front of the eye)

Long term complications

A common problem that may occur months or years following the cataract operation is clouding of the lens capsule bag behind the lens implant. If this occurs it can be treated using a laser beam to make a hole in the capsule allowing light to pass through to the back of the eye normally again.

After successful uncomplicated cataract surgery, some people may experience unwanted optical effects from the new lens implant, such as:

- Seeing a dark crescent in the outer vision
- Halos
- Glare

These are common experiences and are thought to be due to properties of the all types of artificial lens implants. They have no harmful effects on the vision. Very rarely individuals may require further treatment for persistent problems, but in most cases, these symptoms gradually settle down.

The above outlines the most common complications associated with cataract surgery; however, this is not an exhaustive list. During your pre-assessment clinic, our staff will also discuss the risks and benefits of your treatment relating specifically to your eye.

If you do not understand any of the information contained in this leaflet or require further information, please speak to a member of the nursing or medical team when you come for your appointment or contact us on (0161) 276 5227 or (0161) 701 8591 Monday to Friday (excluding public holidays) 8.30am to 3.30pm.

If you require emergency treatment, emergencies are dealt with by the Emergency Eye Department on the ground floor of Manchester Royal Eye Hospital which is open from 8.00am to 8.00pm and can be contacted on (0161) 701 0249. Outside of these hours please contact Ward 55 on (0161) 276 5512 available 24 hours every day.

Questions and answers

If you have any questions you would like to ask the doctor or nurse but may not remember whilst you are here, this space is for you to write them down with the answers.

