

# Patient information

## Cataract surgery

***Important: Please read before your appointment***

### Consent for cataract surgery

Prior to you having cataract surgery, you will be asked to sign a consent form. It is important that you understand this leaflet before you decide to have the operation.

Please note that this leaflet is to give a brief explanation of cataract surgery. If you have any questions, you may wish to write them down so that you can ask one of the pre-assessment team.

The West Suffolk NHS Foundation Trust is a teaching hospital, and as such, is responsible for the training of junior doctors specialising in ophthalmology. Your operation may be undertaken by the Consultant, or another senior eye surgeon. Some operations are performed by doctors in training under Consultant supervision.

### What is a cataract?

The cataract is the lens in your eye, which has become cloudy, making it difficult for you to see well enough to carry out your usual daily activities. To correct this, the cataract will need removing with an operation.

The purpose of the operation is to replace the cloudy lens (cataract) with a plastic lens (implant) inside your eye.

## **One or two eyes?**

Whilst there are a few people that will require both cataracts removed in a short space of time, for the majority of people each eye requires a separate referral. This is subject to the eligibility criteria being met and will not automatically occur.

## **Vision and glasses after the operation**

There is a choice of different strengths (powers) of implants which, just like different strengths of glasses affect how clearly you see when looking into the distance or when looking at near things such as reading a book.

During your assessment you will be able to discuss whether you want to have better vision for distance or near. Most people aim for good distance vision after the operation. If you chose this option, you will usually need reading glasses but may still require glasses for focusing in the distance.

Multifocal lens implants aim to correct both near and distance vision but they are not available on the NHS.

## **Benefits and risks of cataract surgery**

Most people find their eyesight improves considerably after cataract surgery. However, you should be aware that there is a small risk of complications, either during or after the operation.

## **Possible complications during the operation**

- Tearing of the back of the lens capsule with disturbance of the jelly inside the eye that may sometimes result in reduced vision.
- Loss of all or part of the cataract into the back of the eye requiring a further operation which may require a general anaesthetic.
- Bleeding inside the eye.

**The vast majority of patients do not get serious complications.**

## **Possible complications after surgery**

- Bruising of the eye or eyelids. This usually gets better without a problem.
- Allergy to the eye drops. The eye drops will then need to be changed.
- High pressure inside the eye. This may require extra drops to reduce the pressure.
- Clouding of the cornea. This usually gets better without treatment.
- Incorrect strength or dislocation of the implant, which is usually treated with glasses, but occasionally, the implant needs to be changed.
- Swelling of the retina known as macula oedema.
- Detached retina, which can lead to sight loss. This usually occurs many months after the surgery.
- Infection in the eye, this is called Endophthalmitis. This can lead to loss of sight or even the eye.

Complications are rare and in most cases can be treated effectively. However, in a small proportion of cases, further surgery may be needed. Some complications can result in complete loss of sight in the operated eye. This occurs approximately one

in every five hundred operations performed. This is usually due to an infection after surgery and is very rare.

The most common complication is called posterior capsular opacification. This occurs approximately in 20%-40% of all operations performed. It may come on gradually after months or years. When this happens, the back part of the lens capsule, which is left in the eye to support the implant, becomes cloudy. This prevents light reaching the retina.

To treat this, a laser is used to make a small opening in the cloudy membrane in order to improve the eyesight. This is a painless procedure performed in the outpatient department. It only takes a few minutes.

## **The operation**

On the day of your operation:

- do not drive
- do not wear any makeup
- eat and drink as normal
- take all medications as normal unless otherwise instructed
- please expect to be in the department for the whole morning or afternoon

Most surgery will be performed under local anaesthetic. This means that you will be awake during the operation. You will not be able to see what is happening, but you will be aware of a bright light.

Just before the operation you will be given eye drops to enlarge the pupil. After this you will be given an anaesthetic to numb the eye. This may consist simply of eye drops or an injection of local anaesthetic solution into the tissue surrounding the eye.

During the operation you will be asked to keep your head still and lie as flat as possible. The operation normally takes around 20 minutes, however it may take up to 45 minutes.

Most cataracts are removed by a technique called phacoemulsification. The surgeon makes a small cut into the eye and then softens the lens with sound waves and removes it through a small tube.

The back part of the lens capsule is left behind to support the new lens. An artificial lens (implant) is then inserted to replace the cataract. Sometimes a small stitch is put into the eye. At the end of the operation, a shield may be placed over the eye to protect it.

## **After the operation**

If you have discomfort, we suggest that you take a pain reliever, such as Paracetamol, every 4 - 6 hours. Please do not take aspirin as this can cause bleeding, however, if you are prescribed daily aspirin by your GP, then please continue to take it.

You will be given eye drops to take home to reduce inflammation and the risk of infection. The ward nurse will explain how and when to use them. It is normal for your eye to feel scratchy and to have some mild discomfort for a while after cataract surgery. After 4 - 5 days any discomfort should disappear. In most cases, healing will take about 4 weeks.

If you have a shield placed over your eye this can be removed the morning after your operation.

If necessary, glasses can be prescribed by your optician 4 weeks after your surgery.

You will be followed up either in the outpatient clinic or at your opticians.

Certain symptoms could mean that you need prompt treatment. Please contact the Eye Treatment Centre or on call ophthalmologist immediately if you have any of the following symptoms:

- excessive pain
- loss of vision
- increasing redness of the eye

## **Likelihood of better vision**

After the operation you can carry on with your usual daily activities, but your vision may be blurred especially for reading.

**The vast majority of patients have improved eyesight following cataract surgery.**

Please be aware that if you have another condition such as Diabetes, Glaucoma or Age-related Macula Degeneration (ARMD), your quality of vision may still be limited, even after successful surgery.

## **Pre-Assessment**

You will have a pre-assessment appointment before your cataract surgery.

If you wear contact lenses, you need to stop wearing your contact lenses **ONE WEEK** before this pre-assessment.

If you have had laser surgery to reduce your need to wear glasses, **you must let us know as soon as possible.**

Drops will be put into your eyes to dilate your pupils so please **do not drive to this appointment.**

When you attend for your pre-assessment appointment please bring with you the following:

- distance glasses
- medication list
- holiday dates

If you need to alter your appointment, please telephone 01284 713778.

## **Alternatives to cataract surgery**

There is no alternative to cataract surgery, other than to do nothing.

## **Eye Treatment Centre**

Telephone on **01284 713815 / 01284 712636**

Monday to Thursday 9.00 am to 5.00 pm

Friday 9.00 am to 1.00 pm

For emergencies and at the weekend and out of hours:

Telephone 01284 713000 and ask to speak to the 'on call' Ophthalmic Doctor.

West Suffolk NHS Foundation Trust is actively involved in clinical research. Your doctor, clinical team or the research and development department may contact you regarding specific clinical research studies that you might be interested in participating in. If you do not wish to be contacted for these purposes, please email [info.gov@wsh.nsh.uk](mailto:info.gov@wsh.nsh.uk). This will in no way affect the care or treatment you receive.

*If you would like any information regarding access to the West Suffolk Hospital and its facilities please visit the website for AccessAble (the new name for DisabledGo)*  
<https://www.accessable.co.uk/organisations/west-suffolk-nhs-foundation-trust>



© West Suffolk NHS Foundation Trust