

Oxford University Hospitals **NHS**

NHS Foundation Trust

Horton Day Case Unit

Cataract surgery

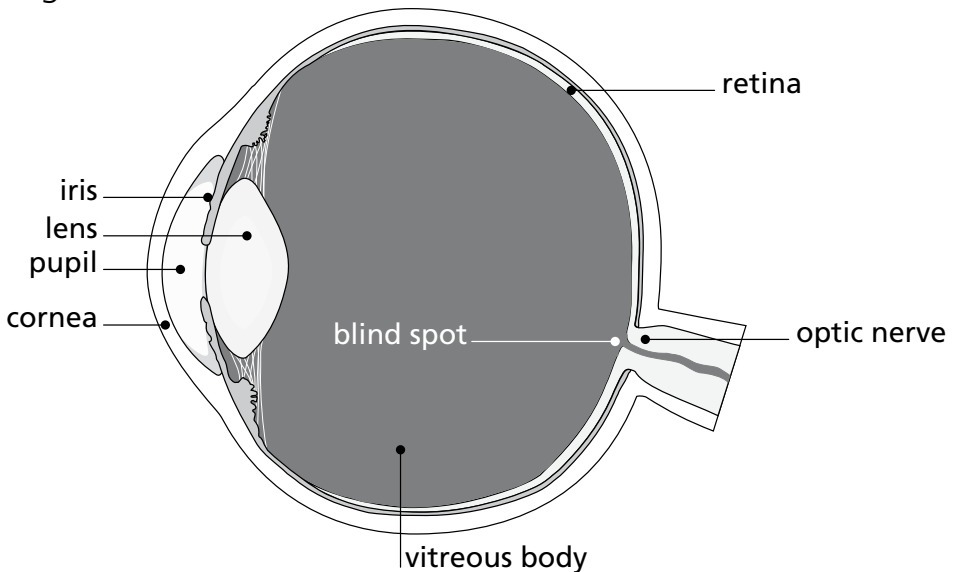
Information for patients



What is a cataract?

A cataract is a condition affecting the lens of the eye, which causes the normally clear lens to become cloudy. This restricts the amount of light that is able to enter the eye, resulting in blurred vision and often dazzle and glare.

The lens is found inside the eye behind the pupil and iris. It is responsible for making a clear image, like the lens in a pair of glasses.



The cause of cataracts is most commonly related to old age, but they can develop at any age, for many reasons. This will be discussed with you at your outpatient appointment.

Cataracts usually develop gradually and can often go unnoticed at first.

Treatment

The only way a cataract can be treated is with an operation to remove the cloudy lens. This is a very small operation which does not involve the use of lasers.

A new artificial lens is put into the eye to replace the natural lens. Sometimes a small stitch or 'suture' may be needed. You will be told after the procedure if a stitch has been used.

The operation is carried out as a day case procedure using local anaesthetic eye drops, to make your eye numb. This means that you will be awake for the procedure and should not need to stay in hospital overnight.

If you have cataracts in both eyes, we will only operate on one eye at a time. This is to allow time for your first eye to heal. Surgery for your other eye will be discussed at your follow-up appointment.

What are the risks?

All operations have some risk and eye surgery is no exception.

- There is a small risk that your vision will not be any better or that it will be worse after a cataract operation. This is either because there is some other problem with your eye (such as macular degeneration) or, rarely, because of complications related to the operation itself (such as bleeding, infection or retinal detachment). The chance of complications arising affects around 1 person for every 1,000 operations performed.
- About 1 in every 3 people need laser treatment to clear clouding of the lens capsule (where the artificial lens sits) at some stage following the actual cataract surgery. This can be done in the outpatient clinic.

Pre-operative assessment and preparing for your operation

You will need to have a pre-operative assessment before your surgery. This will take place in the outpatient clinic.

At the pre-operative assessment we will take measurements of your eye. These are called biometry measurements. These measurements calculate the strength of the artificial lens that is best suited to your eye. The specific strength of lens will be discussed with you before the procedure.

At this appointment we will also give you instructions on how to prepare for your surgery, including any instructions that are specific to you.

On the day of your operation

The Day Case Unit at the Horton General Hospital can be reached from the High Town Road entrance to the hospital.

If you are travelling by car, please park in the main car park and then walk to the department – it is signposted and easy to find. There is disabled parking in the main car parks.

Your arrival time will be on your letter, which also gives you the date of your operation. Please do not arrive too early, as the department does not open until 7.50am.

The actual time of your surgery depends on where you are placed on the surgeons list.

You will need to give the nurses the contact details of your next of kin and also the contact details of the person who will take you home after the procedure, as you will not be able to drive yourself home. It is advisable to have a responsible adult to accompany you home by car or taxi. We do not recommend that you travel home on your own, as you may not be able to see clearly with one eye covered.

You should also not go home on public transport after this procedure. You will need to be taken home by car. This will be more comfortable for you and also quicker for you to return to the hospital if there are any complications on the journey home.

It is also suggested that you have somebody to stay with you overnight, in case you are unsteady on your feet.

Please be aware that you may be in the department for up to six hours.

You will need to bring with you any medication you are currently taking, and also any walking or hearing aids.

If you are on warfarin, please make arrangements to have a blood test the day before your admission date.

This can be done at your GP's surgery.

We will give you different eye drops, to use in your operated eye. If you have glaucoma, please make sure that you have a supply at home of new fresh bottles of any eye drops that you are currently using. Make sure you use a separate bottle of eye drops for your other eye (the eye that has not been operated on). This helps to reduce the chance of infection.

Please make sure that you have something to eat before you come to hospital, as we can only provide tea, coffee and biscuits after the procedure. You are more than welcome to bring a packed lunch to eat after the operation.

As you may be in the department for up to six hours, you might wish to bring an adult friend or relative to stay on the ward and keep you company before and after the operation. You may also bring a book or magazine to read if you wish.

Do not wear any eye or face makeup; if you do, this will need to be removed before the surgery can take place.

When you arrive at the Day Case Unit

When you arrive, you will be seen by the nurses who will be looking after you. They will ask questions that you may have recently been asked before. Please be reassured that these are checks we need to make for your safety. You will have your blood pressure taken and pulse recorded.

You will have eye drops put into your eye. These drops enlarge your pupil so that the doctor can see the cataract. The drops should not affect your vision in any way, but things may appear slightly brighter.

When the eye drops have taken effect (after about half an hour), the doctor will examine your eye and will ask you to sign a consent form to allow the procedure to go ahead. A mark will be made on your forehead, to clearly show which eye you are having surgery on. (This will easily wash off using soap and water.)

The operation

The operation usually takes 20 to 30 minutes. It will be carried out in the main operating theatres. When theatres are ready for you, a theatre nurse will collect you from the ward. You will walk to the theatre or we can take you by wheelchair, if needed.

You will be able to stay in your own clothes during the procedure.

You will be awake throughout the procedure. A trained member of the theatre team will be with you at all times. All through the actual procedure, this person will be holding your hand. It is very important that you do not move. If you need to move, squeeze the hand of the person with you. They will then ask the surgeon to stop the procedure whilst you cough or get more comfortable.

After the operation

Your eye will be covered with a clear plastic shield. There may also be some padding under the shield. The padding will be removed before you go home and you will be left wearing just the clear plastic shield.

Before you are discharged home, the nurses will tell you how to look after your eye. Your nurse will also give you an information leaflet called 'Advice after cataract surgery'. If you are not given this leaflet, please ask for a copy.

We will give you eye drops to put in your eye. You will need to continue using these drops for four weeks. These drops

help to prevent infection and reduce inflammation. We will give you specific instructions on how to use them, after the procedure.

There is usually very little pain associated with this operation. If you do feel any mild pain after the surgery, you can take a painkiller such as paracetamol.

If you have **glaucoma** you may need to be seen again the following day. This appointment may be at the Oxford Eye Hospital. Your nurse will tell you if you do need to be seen the next day.

Follow-up

We will tell you after the procedure if you need a follow-up appointment with the nurse practitioner at the hospital or just a routine eye check with your optician.

How will your vision be after the operation?

Most people who have this procedure notice an improvement in their vision within the first few days after surgery. However, the time it takes can vary widely between each person. It greatly depends on the health of your eye before the operation and whether you have any other eye problems.

You may not have your best vision until you have new glasses prescribed by your optician. This won't happen until your eye has had time to heal; approximately four to six weeks after surgery.

Driving

You should not drive until you can see as well as you could before the procedure; this could take up to two weeks. If you have any doubts about whether you should drive, please see your GP or speak to your optician.

Further questions

If you are unwell, do not wish to go ahead with your surgery, or have any further questions, please contact the Day Case Unit.

Tel: **01295 229 229 383** or **01295 229 767**
(9.00am to 5.00pm, Monday to Friday)

Alternatively, please contact **01295 229 118** to leave a message and we will call you back.

If you have a specific requirement,
need an interpreter, a document in Easy Read,
another language, large print, Braille or
audio version, please call **01865 221 473**
or email **PALSJR@ouh.nhs.uk**

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June 2016
Review: June 2019
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OMI 13510P