



Ophthalmology- Cataract Surgery





Introduction

Cataract surgery

A cataract is an opacity (clouding) of the natural lens in your eye. Cataract surgery involves removing the clouded natural lens and replacing it with a clear plastic lens. Surgery to replace the cloudy lens is the only permanent treatment for cataracts. Glasses may help temporarily while a cataract is in its early development.

This is a very successful operation for a common problem and can immediately relieve the effects of poor sight due to cataracts. Often both eyes develop cataracts, but only one eye can be operated on at a time.

You will normally have this operation under local anaesthetic (where you are awake but can feel no pain). Sometimes for medical reasons it is possible to have a general anaesthetic. You will go home on the same day.

Referrals and appointments for cataract surgery

Patients can be referred for cataract surgery by their GP, their optometrist or if already under the care of the Ophthalmology department. Most patients will receive an appointment with a doctor, optometrist or nurse practitioner for assessment and to discuss the surgery before being added to the waiting list.

If referred by the optometrist some of the initial assessment required for surgery may have been completed at the opticians. This will enable suitable patients to be booked straight in for the pre-operative assessment prior to surgery without having an initial consultation with a doctor, optometrist or nurse practitioner.

All patients will have a pre-operative assessment appointment with a nurse before the date of surgery.

Guidance for Patients

Preparation for the operation

You may have a medical check-up before your operation with a doctor or nurse. This will include some or all of the following checks:

- Your medical and eye history
- An eye examination
- An eye measurement (for the plastic lens)
- Your blood pressure



- A blood test
 - A heart tracing (ECG)
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- Please bring with you any medicines that you are taking in their original containers or a recent copy of your repeat prescription. Remember to tell the nurse if you have diabetes or any allergies.
 - If you take warfarin, aspirin or any other blood thinning drugs you may be asked to stop taking it a few days before your operation. Please ask your specialist doctor/nurse.
 - You should continue to take your usual medication with small sips of water, unless instructed not to.
 - Please take off all make up and jewellery before your operation; please wear a front opening blouse or shirt and bring slippers with you.

If you are having a local anaesthetic you can eat a light meal before coming in for your operation and you may continue to drink water.

If you are having a general anaesthetic, do not eat anything for at least 6 hours before your operation. You may continue to sip water up until 2 hours before surgery.

On the day of your operation

- Please arrive in good time.
- A nurse will go through your details with you.
- The surgeon will see you before your operation and ask you to sign a consent form to confirm that you understand what is involved and agree to go ahead with it. This may have been done earlier at your medical check-up.
- You can remain in your clothes; you will not need to change into a theatre gown if you are having local anaesthetic.
- You will then be taken to the operating theatre by foot.
- You will have an identification band on your wrist and ankle.

The operation

- You will be given eye drops into the eye that is to be operated on to dilate the pupil.
- You will usually have an injection of local anaesthetic for this operation, where you may be aware of touch but you will not feel any pain.
- The surgeon will make a tiny incision (cut) before removing the cataract using ultrasound (reducing it to a liquid). The plastic lens (implant) is then placed inside the eye.
- The tiny cut usually heals itself. Just occasionally you may need a stitch.
- The whole procedure lasts about 20 minutes and you will return to the ward with a pad or shield over your eye.



After the operation

- You will be offered something to eat and drink whilst you recover after the procedure.
- You will be given some eye drops that should be used for the following 3-4 weeks. These help to prevent infection and reduce swelling. Sometimes you will be given tablets to take as well.
- You will also be given a plastic eye shield to wear at night for the next 2 weeks.
- A follow up appointment will be arranged for you either at the hospital or in the community sometime over the next 6 weeks.
- If you had a local anaesthetic, you can go home as soon as you feel ready.
- If you had a general anaesthetic you should be ready to go home in about 4 hours depending upon how you feel.
- A letter will be sent to your GP, you can request a copy if you wish.

Going home

- If you had a general anaesthetic, please make sure that a friend or relative takes you home and stays with you overnight.
- You can remove the eye pad the next day. If your eye appears blood stained or slightly crusted, clean it with cotton wool and cooled, boiled water.
- You may well see some improvement in your vision the day after the operation, colours may appear brighter and objects sharper and it will continue to improve daily. You should be able to read and watch television, provided you do not have any other eye problems.
- Do not rub or touch the eye for 2 weeks, other than to clean it.
- Avoid contact sports (for example, football) and swimming for about a month.
- Sunglasses may be helpful if the eye is sensitive to light.
- Your vision may still be blurred for a few weeks after having the operation, but don't worry this is temporary and it will generally recover within 4 weeks. After your follow-up appointment when the eye has settled properly, you should go and see your optometrist for new glasses.
- Driving – we advise you do not drive for at least a week. You must not drive if your vision is blurred or if you are experiencing double vision.
- Remember to keep using the eye drops as specified. Your GP will give you a repeat prescription if you run out.

Risks

Cataract surgery is very safe, but there is some risk associated with most procedures. For cataract surgery the risks include the following:

- A minor eye infection, soreness or swelling following surgery, which can be corrected by time or treatment with antibiotics. Risk 1 in 20 approximately.
- There is a small risk that your sight will be no better after the operation. This may be because of some other problem with the eye.



- There is a small possibility of a serious problem following surgery, such as glaucoma, retinal detachment or a bit of the cataract remaining. These problems may require further treatment or surgery. Risk 1 in 100 approximately.
- The risk of severe vision loss is 1 in 1,000 approximately.

Please talk to your specialist doctor before the operation if you have concerns about these risks.

What should I do if my health is deteriorating?

It is normal for your eye to be a little red and watery for a day or two after the operation. But please phone the hospital or your GP if:

- The eye becomes more red,
- The eye becomes more painful,
- The eye becomes increasingly sticky,
- Your vision becomes more blurred,
- You have frequent headaches,
- Your vision deteriorates in any way.

These may be indications of an infection or of other risks mentioned in the guidance section.

Contact Us

Luton and Dunstable Hospital – Eye Unit

To change or cancel your appointment please call 01582 561385, Monday to Friday between 08.30 – 17.00.

Alternatively visit <https://www.bedfordshirehospitals.nhs.uk/change-cancel-appointment/change-cancel-appointment-luton-and-dunstable-university-hospital/>.

To change or cancel your admission date please telephone the contact number on your admission letter between 09.00 – 17.00 Monday to Friday.

If you have a clinical query relating to your cataract surgery please phone 01582 491166 and ask the operator to bleep the ophthalmic nurse practitioner, Monday to Friday 9am-5pm. After 5pm and at the weekend ask the operator to bleep the on-call doctor.

Moorfields Eye Unit at Bedford Hospital

To change or cancel your appointment please call 01234 792290 option 2, Monday to Friday between 09.00 – 17.00 or you can send an email to eyesurgery@bedfordhospital.nhs.uk.

If you have a clinical query relating to your cataract surgery, please phone Bedford Hospital switchboard on 01234 355122 and ask the operator to connect to the ophthalmic



nurse practitioner, Monday to Friday 9am-5pm or dial 01234 792290 option 1 for outpatients. After 5pm and at the weekend ask the operator to bleep the on-call doctor.