

Before your cataract / lens surgery

Cataract surgery involves removing your own cloudy lens (which sits behind your pupil) and replacing it with an artificial lens implant. It is a very gentle, painless procedure and usually takes place under local anaesthesia as a day case using eyedrops to numb the eye.

Measurements before your surgery (Biometry)

All patients having cataract surgery need measurements before surgery to determine the power of the artificial lens implant. With these measurements, the type and power of the implant will be calculated. Contact lens wearers should leave their lenses out for at least two weeks before the measurements.

Types of lens implant

Standard: These lenses have a fixed focus and are usually chosen to enable good distance vision. Reading glasses are likely to be needed with this lens.

Multifocal: These lenses are used to enable as little spectacle use as possible after your surgery both for near and distance. In certain patients, these are a very good option. It can not be guaranteed that a small reading prescription will not be needed.

Toric: If a patient has significant astigmatism (an imperfect curvature of the front of the eye), a toric addition can be used in both standard and multifocal lenses to maximise the sharpness of vision. This is recommended for both standard and multifocal lens implants.

The price of all these lenses differs, and this will be fully explained to you when it has been decided which lens is best for you.

On the day of surgery

You can expect to be at the hospital for a few hours. You may have a small wait depending on where you are on the theatre list. Ladies should not wear any eye make up on the day of surgery. Your pupil will be dilated before surgery. This takes about an hour and it allows access to the cataract. You will be asked to sign a consent form.

The benefits of surgery always outweigh the risks. The risks are as follows:

- Infection: risk = 0.04 % or 1 in 2500 cases. This can lead to reduced vision and requires emergency admission and treatment with antibiotics
- Retinal detachment. This is rare , occurring in between 1 and 8 per thousand cases after cataract surgery, more commonly in shortsighted patients. This would require a further operation.
- Haemorrhage. This is very rare, about 1 in 10000 but can be associated with significant visual loss.
- Dislocation of part or all the cataract. This is very rare and would require further surgery at a later date.
- Inflammation. This is usually mild and responds to eye drops.
- Fluid collection in the retina. This happens in up to 1% of patients. It can respond very well to eye drops but very occasionally persists.
- Not achieving the refractive target and needing spectacles after cataract/lens surgery: Despite all the advances in lens calculations and measurements, it can not be guaranteed that you will not need spectacles after surgery. Up to 95% of patients achieve a satisfactory target, the remainder may need a small spectacle correction.

The surgery lasts for about ten to fifteen minutes. It is relatively painless and you do not see or feel anything unpleasant. During surgery, it is important to keep the eye as still as possible. At the end of surgery, you will have a clear shield placed over the eye. Your vision will be blurred to start with but as the eye recovers over the first two days, the vision will gradually and steadily improve. Minor irritation of the eye is common, occasionally taking a few weeks to settle.

After your cataract / lens surgery

You will be discharged from hospital very soon after your surgery. The nurses will give you some post operative instructions. You will need someone to drive you home. You will be asked to keep the plastic eye shield over the eye until the following morning. You will also be asked to use this shield at night for the first week to protect the eye.

It is important to relax for the rest of the day. Do not do anything strenuous. You can use your eyes as much as you like.

On the day of surgery, your vision will be blurred although you will be able to see a little through the eye shield. The eye may be a little scratchy but it should not be painful. Occasionally patients report a mild dull ache which can be relieved using a simple painkiller such as paracetamol.

The morning after surgery.

Remove the eye shield. If there is any discharge from the eye, it can be gently wiped away using the water and swabs that you will have been given. Start the eye drops and use them four times a day unless instructed otherwise. There are two eyedrops to use for two weeks until your post operative appointment. One is an anti-inflammatory steroid drop. Shake the bottle before inserting this drop. It may sting a little. The second drop is an antibiotic. This drop should be kept in the fridge.

It does not matter which drop is used first but leave a gap of about a minute or two between drops. The vision is better on the first day after surgery but in most patients, is even better on day two and can sometimes take a few days to settle.

Dos and don'ts after cataract surgery

Do use the eye drops until your next clinic visit

Do use the eye shield at night for the first week

Do take gentle exercise as soon as you like

Do bend down if you wish

Do drive as soon as you are happy that you can see a number plate clearly at 20.5 metres (25 yards) with both eyes open.

Do play gentle sport such as golf after a few days

Do take a shower as soon as you like but avoid getting water in the eye.

Do use whichever spectacles help in the first few weeks after your surgery. This may be an old pair of spectacles or a simple pair of ready readers can assist with reading. The usual power is +2.00 - +2.50. These can be bought at most supermarkets and chemists

Do not take strenuous exercise for the first week. This includes running, cycling, tennis, some yoga and pilates, gym work etc

Do not swim for 2 weeks.

Do not see the optician for new glasses until you have been seen at the clinic post operatively. Most opticians will see you for new spectacles at between 4 and 6 weeks after surgery.

Ladies, Do not wear eye make up for 1 week.

Contact details after your surgery

If you have any concerns and wish to ask any questions, the following numbers may be useful.

My Office: 01256 377640 email: sandy.sec@yahoo.com

Hampshire Clinic Switchboard: 01256 357111

Emergency eye clinic at North Hampshire Hospital: 01256 313572

Out of hours emergency contact:

Frimley Park emergency eye service: 0300 614 5000 (ask for the on call eye doctor)