Information About Your Day Care Cataract Operation

Please read this booklet carefully.
It contains important information to help you plan for your forthcoming operation.
Please bring this booklet to all your appointments.

Ophthalmology Day Care Unit
Tel: 01473 702007
(before surgery only)
Welcome to the Eye Department

If you are unable to read the following print, please ask a friend or relative to help you.
The following information is to help you and your family to prepare fully for your eye operation.

Please take the time to read the whole of this booklet. We would appreciate you bringing it with you to each appointment.

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Informed consent for cataract surgery

This booklet gives you information that will help you decide whether to have cataract surgery. You might want to discuss it with a relative or carer.

At your pre-assessment appointment today you will be asked to sign a consent form for your operation. We appreciate you may not be able to read this booklet today but it is important that you read and understand it before you arrive for your operation.

If you have any questions, you may wish to write them down so that you can ask one of the hospital staff.

The cataract

Your eye surgeon has recommended surgery because the lens in your eye has become cloudy making it difficult for you to see well enough to carry out your daily activities.

If the cataract is not removed, your vision may stay the same, or it may get worse. Waiting for a longer period of time will not necessarily make the operation more difficult, unless your eyesight becomes so poor that all you see is light and dark.

The operation

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

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From information provided by the Royal College of Ophthalmology, February 2001
An experienced eye surgeon will carry out the operation or will supervise a doctor in training who may also perform some of the operation.

With a local anaesthetic 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 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 15–20 minutes, but can take up to 45 minutes. When possible, a nurse will hold your hand to make sure that you are all right. Most cataracts are removed by a technique called phacoemulsification. The surgeon makes a small cut in the eye, softens the lens with sound waves and removes it through a small tube. The back layer of the lens is left behind. An artificial lens (implant) is then inserted to replace the cataract. Sometimes a small dissolvable stitch is put in the eye. At the end of the operation, a pad or shield may be put over your eye to protect it.

**After the operation**

If you have discomfort, we suggest that you take a pain reliever every 4–6 hours (but not aspirin as this can cause bleeding). It is normal to feel itching, sticky eyelids and mild discomfort for a while after cataract surgery. Some fluid discharge is common. Be prepared for your eye to feel sore for up to a week after the operation. In most cases, healing will take 2–6 weeks after which new spectacles can be prescribed by your optician.

You will be given eye drops to reduce inflammation. The hospital staff will explain how and when to use them. **It is very important that you do not rub your eye.**

Certain symptoms could mean that you need prompt treatment. Please contact the hospital immediately if you have any of the following symptoms:

- excessive pain;
- loss of vision; or
- increasing redness of the eye.

**Likelihood of better vision**

After the operation you may read or watch TV almost straight away, but your vision may be blurred. The healing eye needs to adjust so that it can focus properly with the other eye, especially if the other eye has a cataract.

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

Please note that if you have another condition such as diabetes, glaucoma or age-related macular degeneration your quality of vision may still be limited even after successful surgery.
Benefits and risks of cataract surgery

The most obvious benefits are greater clarity of vision and improved colour vision. Because lens implants are selected to compensate for existing focusing problems, most people find their eyesight improves considerably after surgery but you will need to replace your spectacles.

However, you should be aware that there is a small risk of complications, either during or after the operation.

Some possible complications during the operation

- Tearing of the back part of the lens capsule with disturbance of the gel 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.

Some possible complications after the operation

- Bruising of the eye or eyelids.
- High pressure inside the eye.
- Clouding of the cornea.
- Incorrect strength or dislocation of the implant.
- Swelling of the retina (macula oedema).
- Detached retina which can lead to loss of sight.
- Infection in the eye (endophthalmitis) which can lead to loss of sight or even the eye.
- Allergy to the medication used.

Complications are rare and in most cases can be treated effectively. In a small proportion of cases, further surgery may be needed. Very rarely some complications can result in blindness.

The most common complication is called ‘posterior capsular opacification’. It may come on gradually after months or years. When this happens, the back part of the lens capsule, which was left in the eye to support the implant, becomes cloudy. This prevents light from reaching the retina. To treat this, the eye specialist uses a laser beam to make a small opening in the cloudy membrane in order to improve the eyesight. This is a painless outpatient procedure which normally takes only a few minutes.

Please use this space to jot down any questions you may have.
Your Clinic Visit

Pre-admission assessment

Eye drops will be used today which dilate your pupils and blur vision for a few hours. **DO NOT DRIVE YOURSELF. Please arrange for a relative, friend or carer to bring you.**

On this visit you will be seen by a nurse who will explain the plan of care for your eye operation and the care needed at home after your discharge from the hospital. A doctor or nurse will also perform a number of important tests on your vision. This appointment takes place in the Ophthalmic Pre-Assessment Clinic in Clinic 11, which is in the main Outpatients Department, accessible via Entrance 6.
Preparing for surgery
Please have a bath or shower and shampoo your hair, either the night before or on the morning of the day of your operation.

The day of your operation
• **Eat a light meal before you leave for the hospital.**
• Allow plenty of time for your journey to the hospital.
• Take any tablets or medicines as usual **except water tablets**, which can be taken after your operation.
• Please bring a dressing gown and a spare open-necked top with you.
• Before leaving your home, please put in one drop of **Cyclopentolate 1%** in the eye to be operated on. The nurse will have given this to you at your pre-assessment appointment.
  
  **NB** – This drop will:
  • **sting**;
  • **dilate your pupil**; and
  • **blur your vision**.
• You **must not** drive yourself to or from the hospital.
• **Bring all your medication, inhalers and eyedrops with you.**
• Wear clean, loose, comfortable clothes. Your top should be open-necked.
• Please leave valuables and jewellery at home – including earrings.
• Please **do not** wear any make-up.
• Your stay will last approximately 2–3 hours.
When you arrive at the hospital

- Access to the Ophthalmic Day Care Unit (ODCU) is reached via Maternity (Entrance 8) and by following the internal signs. There is a drop-off point outside the ODCU (near the Maternity Entrance). Wheelchairs are available from Outpatients and inside ODCU, please follow external signs.
- Please be aware that ODCU is a mixed-sex area.
- You will be required to change into a special gown for your surgery. There is limited provision for the storage of your own possessions, we therefore advise you not to bring a suitcase.
- Your nurse will put drops into the eye to be operated on, these dilate your pupil.
- We suggest your relative or carer waits in the restaurant (opposite the Day Unit) where refreshments are available, until your operation is over. Seating space is limited in ODCU.
- A theatre department assistant will escort you in a special wheelchair to the operating department.
- In the anaesthetic room more eye drops will be put in and you may be given an injection into your eyelid/around your eye, this makes the area numb and you will not be able to move your eye or open it for a few hours.
- Occasionally a needle may be inserted into your arm or the back of your hand.
- You are then wheeled into the operating theatre.
- You are not left alone at any time.

During your operation

- During the operation a fine cover is placed over the upper part of your face. This should not interfere with your breathing as your nostrils and mouth are not covered.
- You will need to lie as still and flat as possible for the length of the operation (about 20–45 minutes).
- Please do not talk during this time.
- When possible someone will be there to hold your hand; please squeeze their hand if you are in difficulty.
- The machines used during the operation tend to be noisy.
- You may get a wet neck and hair from the water used during the operation – do not be alarmed.
- A small dressing and a protective plastic shield are placed over the eye at the end of the operation. These are secured in place with medical sticky tape. (Please note that you will need some more tape when you get home. Unfortunately we cannot provide this. You will need to buy some, such as Micropore, from a pharmacy before your operation date.)
After your operation

- The theatre assistant will wheel you back to the ODCU.
- Your nurse will greet you, check your blood pressure and offer you some light refreshment and may give you a pill to take to prevent pain in your eye.
- The needle in your hand is removed.
- You can then get dressed.
- The nurse will confirm the care you will require at home and provide you with your eye drops.
- Any questions you or your relative or carer may have will be answered.
- If you feel well, you can then go home.
- Please take it easy for the remainder of the day.
- Please keep your eye covering on until the following morning.

The day after your operation

- Wash your hands before carefully removing the plastic shield and eye pad.
- Gently wash your face, being careful around your eye.
- Bathe around the eye with cooled, boiled water and tissues.
- Put in the eye drops as prescribed.
- Please wear the eye shield for the first **five nights** after your operation. It can be secured with Micropore or Transpore tape which can be purchased at your local pharmacy. The shield can be washed each morning in hot, soapy water and then dried.
- Please **do not** put any further dressing or tissues under your eye shield at night.

Eye drops

- Please put them in as prescribed until your eye doctor advises you to stop. This could be for up to four weeks.
- The eye drops must be instilled to your operated eye for a minimum of two weeks, unless you are advised differently on discharge. If you run out of your eye drops **before** two weeks, **please contact your GP**.
Afterwards

After your operation you may experience:

- **Eye ache around the eye**  Please take your normal pain relief tablets.
- **Contact us immediately if eye pain/ache persists, gets worse and/or your eye becomes more red and your vision gets worse.** During office hours please ring Ipswich Hospital on 01473 712233 and ask for the Eye Clinic Coordinator. You will be able to speak to a registered nurse. At night, over a weekend or on a bank holiday, please ring Ipswich Hospital on 01473 712233 and ask for the ophthalmologist on call to be contacted. He or she will give you the appropriate advice or arrange a time and place for you to be seen if necessary.

- **Blurred vision**  This should slowly clear. If your vision gets worse **contact us immediately.**
- **Headache**  Please take your normal pain relief tablets, except aspirin which can cause bleeding. If your headache persists or gets worse **contact us immediately.**
- **Double vision**  This will gradually wear off in about 2–6 hours.
- **Watering eye**  Please use **clean** tissues to gently dab under your eye. Only use each tissue once and then discard. If your eye becomes very sticky **contact us immediately.**
- **After one month**  If you experience any problems after one month from surgery you need to contact your optometrist (optician).

Normal lifestyle

- Please take things easy for the first week. You can wash your hair but avoid getting shampoo or water in your eye for two weeks. Try using a mild shampoo.
- Go outside, though on sunny days you may find wearing a pair of sunglasses more comfortable.
- We advise you to avoid swimming for the first fortnight.
- You may drive after your operation only if your eye doctor has allowed you to do so before your operation.

**DO NOT RUB YOUR EYE AT ANY TIME**
New spectacles
After your operation your vision may initially be blurred. You can wear your present spectacles if they help. At your next hospital outpatient appointment, you will be advised when to have your eyesight check for new spectacles, this is usually about four weeks later with your own optometrist.

THE MAIN THING IS TO ENJOY YOUR NEW VISION – ESPECIALLY THE COLOURS!

Follow-up Appointment

Most patients now go to their own optometrist for their follow-up appointment.

You should make an appointment to see your optometrist for approximately one month after your cataract operation.

The nursing staff in OCDU will let you know if your optometrist has received the necessary training. If not, they will let you know of the optometrists in your area who have.

We are always seeking to improve our service and would welcome any comments you may wish to make, including when you think we have done things well.

Hand cleaning gel is available throughout the hospital. Please use it. We appreciate your cooperation.
Key Points

Before you come to the hospital for the operation
1 You must have arranged transport to and from the hospital. You will not be able to drive yourself.
2 You must put the eyedrop in your eye before you leave for the hospital.
3 Please tell us if you have been a patient in hospital recently or have been in contact with anyone with MRSA.

After the operation
1 You must put eyedrops in your operated eye (or someone must do this for you) for up to four times a day and for up to four weeks. Make sure you have organised this.
2 Do not rub your eye. We cannot stress this enough.