

Cataract Surgery, it's your choice

This information leaflet is designed to help you understand the need, benefits and risks of cataract surgery and explain what options are available.

1. Do I really need this treatment?

You have been told you have a cataract affecting your vision. Inside the front of the eye there is a lens that over time can become cloudy, making it hard for you to see. When this happens we call it a cataract. When it gets to a certain stage your optometrist may suggest treatment. Currently the only treatment is an operation to remove the cloudy lens and replace it with a new artificial lens.

This operation should improve your eyesight and quality of life, but it is not a medical necessity – it is up to you to decide if you want surgery. If you are finding that your vision is impaired so that you are having trouble with your day-to-day activities – like reading, watching television, seeing bus numbers or street signs, etc. – then surgery may be worth considering. If your eyesight is not causing you any major problems then you should consider why you would want an operation

2. What are the benefits to me?

Surgery should improve your eyesight so that you can do the things that you are currently finding difficult. You will usually still require glasses after the operation to see as clearly as possible. Cataract surgery may not be appropriate if you have other medical conditions that affect your eyes. Your optometrist should be able to tell you if this is the case.

3. Are there any risks or side-effects?

Every operation carries risks, including cataract surgery. The risks of surgery include bleeding, infection, swelling and damage to structures in the eye, which may lead to further treatment including a second operation.

Any complication has the potential to make your vision worse instead of better. A serious complication that could make your vision worse occurs in less than 2 out of 100 people who have the operation.

When a cataract is significantly advanced there is a slightly higher risk of complications. Your optometrist will be able to discuss the risks of surgery with you further.

4. How can I improve my condition or health?

New glasses may improve your vision. A magnifier may help you with reading and other short distance activities. If you are a driver and decide not to have surgery you should discuss this with your optometrist.

5. What will happen if I don't do anything?

It is likely that your vision will get worse. It can take many months, even years for cataracts to develop. When advanced, a cataract can cause significant problems to your vision. Your optometrist will be able to discuss with you how advanced your cataract is.

It is for you to decide whether you feel that your vision is affecting your quality of life enough that you wish to consider surgery at this time. If you are unsure please discuss this with your optometrist, friends and family to help you make an informed decision.

Do you have any questions?

Your optometrist will be able to answer any further questions you have about cataract surgery and discuss possible alternatives to surgery with you.