



GUIDE

**University of Ottawa
Eye Institute,
The Ottawa Hospital,
General Campus**

Cataract Surgery



**The Ottawa | L'Hôpital
Hospital | d'Ottawa**



Disclaimer

This is general information developed by The Ottawa Hospital. It is not intended to replace the advice of a qualified healthcare provider. Please consult your own personal physician who will be able to determine the appropriateness of the information for your specific situation.

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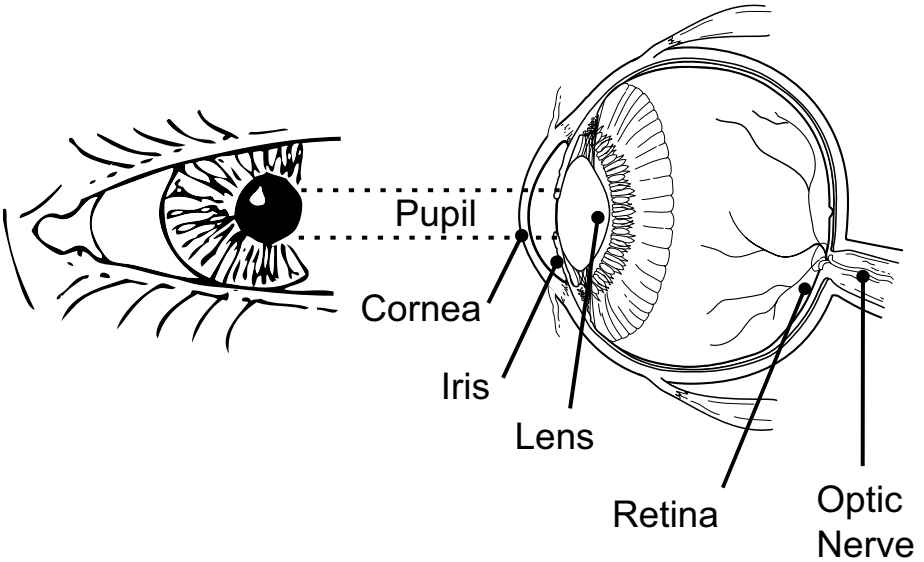
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Introduction

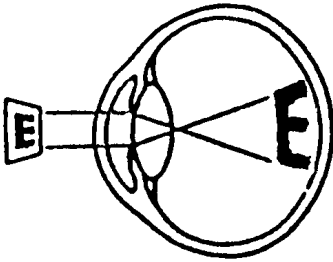
This booklet is intended to help you and your family understand cataracts and their treatment. We hope that by reading this, you will have a better understanding of cataract surgery and your role in making your surgery a success.

The Normal Eye

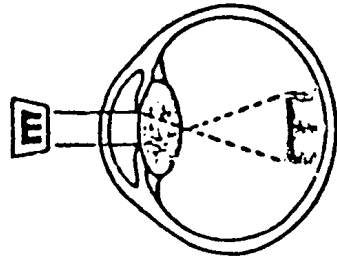


What is a cataract?

A cataract is a clouding of the lens of the eye. Like a camera, the normal eye has a transparent lens that focuses images. While the camera focuses the image on a film, the eye focuses the image on the retina. If the lens is cloudy, the image on the retina is not clear and the vision becomes blurred.



**Normal eye
side view**



Eye with cataract

What causes cataracts?

Cataracts develop slowly as we grow older. They are due to changes in the lens proteins that occur with age. It may take several years for symptoms to appear. Rarely a child is born with cataracts.

Cataracts may develop more rapidly:

- in people with certain diseases
- following the intake of some medications
- following traumatic eye injuries

Exposure to ultra-violet rays and smoking may also increase the incidence of cataracts.

What are the symptoms of cataracts?

The symptoms reported by patients are:

- cloudy, blurred vision
- colors appear less bright than before
- better near vision early on, but later on, blurring at all distances
- difficulty driving at night because car lights seem too bright
- glare from the sun or from lamps
- double vision
- pupil appearing white (very advanced stage).

What is the treatment?

The only way to treat a cataract is to have it removed surgically. The cataract is then replaced by a clear, artificial lens (intraocular lens).

Contrary to popular belief, laser treatment cannot be used to remove a cataract. However, a cloudy film may develop over time on the capsule that contains the lens implant. This is known as a secondary cataract and can be treated quite easily by laser during an office visit. It is a fast and painless procedure and your vision is restored quickly.

When should I have surgery?

In general, the cataract should be operated on when it interferes with your daily activities. If your vision decreases below the provincial driving standards, you will need to have the surgery so that you can continue to drive. Your doctor will let you know if you can drive or not. Call your surgeon if while you are waiting for surgery, your vision deteriorates significantly.

Before your surgery

1. Make sure you tell your eye doctor about all the medications and eye drops you take.
2. Do **NOT** eat after midnight the night before your surgery. You may however drink **clear fluids only (apple juice, black coffee, black tea, jello)** up to 3 hours before you come to the hospital. For example, if you are asked to come in at 10:00 a.m., stop drinking after 7:00 a.m.
3. Regular medications (such as a blood pressure or heart pill) may be taken with a **sip** of water, **up to one hour before surgery** unless otherwise indicated.
4. Continue to take your blood thinners like Coumadin or anti-inflammatory drugs like Aspirin **unless** you are told by your surgeon to stop taking them before surgery.

5. People with diabetes will receive special instructions during their pre-admit visit. They are usually told not to take their diabetic pills or insulin before surgery, but to bring them to the hospital.
6. If you take puffers or nitroglycerin, bring them with you on the day of the surgery.
7. If you develop a fever or an infection the day before surgery, please notify your surgeon.
8. Refrain from drinking alcohol 24 hours before and after surgery. This is to avoid any effects from the mixing of alcohol and the medications given to you.

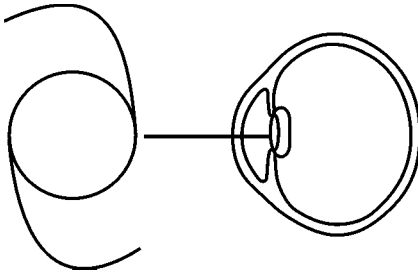
Cataract surgery

Most cataract surgeries are performed on an out-patient basis at the Eye Institute (3rd floor, Module F). The surgery usually takes from 20 to 30 minutes. Plan to be here for 2 to 3 hours.

Upon your arrival to Module F, you will be prepared for surgery by the nursing staff. Drops will be placed in your eye in order to prevent infection and to dilate your pupil (make it larger). Dilation of the pupil gives the surgeon better access to your cataract.

You will then meet the anesthesiologist or his/her assistant who will give you medications through an intravenous to help you relax. You will be awake during surgery, but you will not feel any pain. Your eye will be “frozen” with either local freezing or with special drops and gel.

The surgery involves a small incision. The cataract is broken into small pieces with a small ultra-sonic probe. The pieces are removed with a vacuum-like system. This technique is called phacoemulsification. An intraocular lens (IOL) implant is then inserted into the eye.



***Intraocular
lens***

Side view
of the eye

The implant is permanent and cannot be seen or felt. It does not require care. The Eye Institute uses a standard foldable intraocular lens covered by OHIP. Out-of-province patients may need to pay for the lens. There are other types of intraocular lenses now available (e.g. multifocal lenses) for an extra charge. Don't hesitate to ask your surgeon about them.

Complications

Although problems are rare with cataract removal, all surgeries have potential for complications. After cataract surgery, vision is improved in over 95% of the cases.

Possible complications include:

- increased pressure in the eye (glaucoma)
- retinal tear or detachment
- inflammation inside the eye
- infection of the eye (endophthalmitis)
- bleeding inside the eye
- displacement of the lens implant
- complications of local anesthesia (if used)

All these complications can be treated. Your surgeon can discuss them with you.

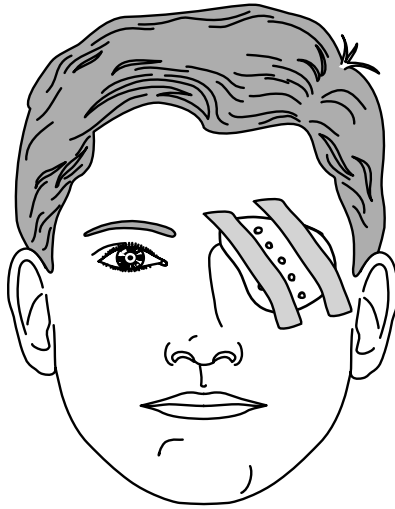
After your surgery

You will be able to go home about 30 minutes after your surgery, once the effects of the medications have worn off. A responsible adult **must accompany** you home.

You may *or may not* have a patch and a shield on your eye. If so, keep them on until you see your surgeon the next day. If you do not have a dressing, you will be given a shield to wear at night.

The nurses in the recovery room area will monitor your blood pressure and pulse and offer you a small snack. They will also provide you with written instructions. Follow them carefully.

Your doctor will give you a prescription for drops. You should have this filled at the pharmacy the same day. If you do not have a dressing on your eye, **start your drops the day of the surgery**. While you are at the pharmacy, do not forget to **buy some tape** to hold your shield in place at night.



Proper placement of eye shield

Will I have pain after surgery?

You may feel some discomfort or feel like you have a grain of sand in your eye. We recommend acetaminophen (e.g.: “Tylenol”) for the pain if you are not allergic to it. Your doctor may prescribe something stronger. Your eye may appear a bit red for a few days.

You may also notice some discharge in your eye in the morning.

Contact your surgeon or call the Eye Institute if:

- **the redness or discharge increases in your eye**
- **your pain is severe and is not relieved by pain medication**
- **you experience a sudden decrease in vision.**

Eye Institute: 613-737-8575

After hours, go to the Emergency Department of the hospital.

- Emergency Department, The Ottawa Hospital,
General Campus: 613-737-8000

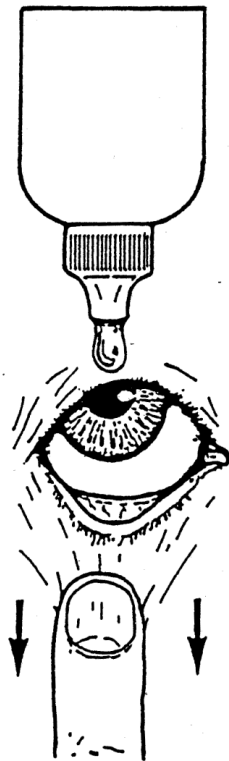
How do I apply eye drops?

You will have to apply eye drops for several weeks after surgery. Some doctors also prescribe drops a few days before surgery.

Here is how to proceed:

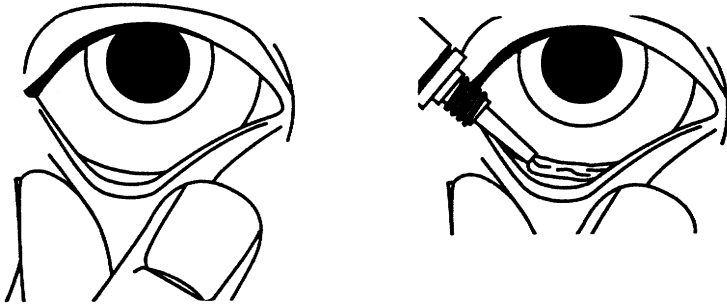
1. Wash your hands carefully.
2. Read the label to ensure you have the right medication.
3. Sit with your head tilted backwards or lie down.
4. Shake the bottle.
5. Pull down on your lower lid with your middle finger and look up.

6. Hold the bottle in the other hand and apply the drop. Do not let the eye dropper touch your eye.
7. Close your eye gently.
8. Wipe off the excess from your cheek, but do not rub your eye.
9. Wait 3–5 minutes if you have to use another eye medication.
10. You do not have to wake up at night to take your eye drops. Just follow a regular daytime schedule.



How do I apply eye ointment?

Follow the procedure we have just described but make a pocket with your lower eyelid using your thumb and second finger. Apply approximately 1 to 2 cm of ointment. Twist the tube sharply in order to separate the ointment from the tube.



Application of eye ointment

When will I be able to resume my normal activities?

You may resume your normal activities as soon as you feel well. For about 1 to 3 weeks however, you must be careful with some activities:

- Avoid straining and heavy lifting. If you have to hold your breath to pick up an object, it is probably too heavy.
- Try to bend at the knees and not the waist.
- Do not rub your eye.

- Do not shake your head vigorously (when you dry your hair for example).
- You may resume sexual activity when you feel well, but some doctors prefer that you wait 2 weeks after surgery. Ask your surgeon for his/her opinion.
- Do not drive until your ophthalmologist says it is safe to do so.
- Do not apply eye make-up for 2 weeks after surgery.
- If you swim, do not put your head underwater for about 2 weeks.
- For a month after surgery, be careful **not to apply direct pressure** to your eye (such as with your finger for example).

How do I clean my operated eye?

You may use a clean face-cloth to wash around your eye. Clean the lower lid only, starting from the inner corner of your eye to the outside corner. **Do not apply pressure on your upper eye lid.**

You may take a shower and shampoo your hair the day after surgery. Do not direct the shower nozzle onto your face and avoid getting soap or water directly into your eye. Keep your eyes closed or use a clean facecloth to cover your eye. If you visit the hair dresser, protect your eye from the hair spray with a clean towel.

Can I wear my glasses?

Typically, you will get your best vision one month after surgery. Your doctor may then change your prescription glasses. Meanwhile, you can wear your old glasses if they are comfortable. If not, ask an optician to remove the lens of your glasses and replace it with a non-corrective lens until you get your new prescription.

By wearing your glasses during the day, you protect your eye. This is why you will receive a shield to wear at night, for 1 to 2 weeks after surgery. Do **not put anything** (gauze or tissue) underneath your shield.

When putting your glasses on, hold them by the tip to prevent injury to your eye.

We suggest that you wear sunglasses on bright and sunny days for your comfort and protection.

For any further questions concerning your cataract surgery, please do not hesitate to ask your eye doctor or call the Eye Institute at 613-737-8575. Our nurses will be happy to answer your questions.

**Visit our websites at:
www.eyeinstitute.net
and www.ottawahospital.on.ca**

