

## Cataract Surgery

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**If you have any questions please telephone Eye Day Case Unit on 01392 406013. Monday to Friday 09.00-17.00**

### Information about cataract surgery

- This leaflet gives you information to help you decide whether to have cataract surgery. We carry out cataract surgery at West of England Eye unit (WEEU) based in Wonford Hospital Exeter, Nightingale hospital Exeter and Axminster Hospital.
- Our surgeons and surgical teams pride themselves on having a friendly and warm relationship with our patients and their families. We are very keen that you should feel able to ask any questions, and they will do their best to answer them fully.
- Please feel free to ask any questions of the team, or to make suggestions for improvement.

### Information about Cataract surgery

#### What is a Cataract?

- A cataract is a clouding of the natural lens in the eye. It is a very common condition, and generally affects people as they get older - although in some circumstances they can occur at younger ages. The clouded lens

prevents light from travelling to the retina at the back of the eye and so the quality of your vision is reduced. Removing this cloudy lens, and replacing it with a plastic lens allows light to reach the back of your eye.

- As the lens in the eye is responsible for focusing the light, cataract surgery provides an opportunity to adjust your glasses prescription. We generally aim to reduce your need for distance glasses, but you may still require glasses to get the best vision possible - you will inevitably require reading glasses after cataract surgery.

#### Prognosis

- The outcomes from modern cataract surgery are very good, and most people can expect to notice an improvement in their eyesight. This improvement may however be limited if there are other disease affecting the eye such as Macular Degeneration, Glaucoma or Diabetic eye disease.

#### Pre-op assessment

- Prior to your surgery we will either telephone you or invite you into hospital in order that we can carry out pre-op assessment. We will ask you about any medication you take and discuss your medical history. At this appointment we will discuss with

you the best hospital location for your surgery and give you the opportunity to ask any questions that you may have.

## Is there anything I should do to prepare for my operation?

- Unless you have been told otherwise, please take all your usual medication on the day of surgery. If you are having a local Anaesthesia anaesthetic you can eat and drink as normal. If you use eye drops for GLAUCOMA or DRY EYE, please have new bottles ready for after the operation to avoid any cross infection. Arrange for someone to collect you from the hospital, as you will not be able to drive home.

## Day of Surgery

- On the day of surgery your details will be checked numerous times- including which eye we will be operating on, we will double check your medications, and allergies to confirm that no changes have happened since your pre-op appointment.
- Surgery is carried out under local anesthetic (you will be awake during the procedure). Don't worry you will not be able to see the operation as the eye drops used will blur your vision during the procedure
- During the operation you will be asked to lie flat on the operating table, and the area around your eye will be cleaned and dried. Your surgeon will place a sterile blanket over your eye and the side of your face. Some patients find this to be slightly claustrophobic, however this sensation soon passes.
- You will notice a bright light shining in your eye during the operation, and

may be aware of sensations of pressure or water flowing on the side of your face. You may hear a buzzing noise.

- The operation takes around 10-15 minutes, and most patients are pleasantly surprised by how comfortable the procedure is. Removing the sticky blanket is often the most uncomfortable part of the operation!
- Please wear comfortable clothing.
- Even though the actual operation takes minutes please be prepared to be in hospital for up to half a day.

## What happens after the operation?

- A separate discharge information leaflet will be given out on the day of surgery (Information for Patients following a Cataract Operation).
- You will need to administer eye drops four times a day for 28 days following your surgery. The hospital staff will explain how and when to use them.
- The first few weeks following your surgery, you must avoid getting your eye wet and avoid activities where debris can get in your eye, for example swimming and gardening.
- If you have discomfort we recommend the use of a pain reliever such as Paracetamol 1g every 4-6 hours.

## Driving after your Cataract operation

- As long as you meet the DVLA eyesight requirements, i.e. to be able to read a number plate at a distance of 20 metres, you should be able to drive 48 hours after your surgery. However, your un-operated eye must have full

field of vision. Therefore, if the un-operated eye has any eye disease you should discuss the issue of driving with the doctor who assesses you prior to surgery. If not driving during this period could be a problem for you please discuss it with the eye doctor who sees you prior to surgery.

## Vision following surgery

- Your vision will take time to recover following surgery. Although many patients see some improvement within the first week others may not see any significant improvement until their glasses are updated (at least 4 - 6 weeks following surgery).
- If you are having both cataracts removed there will be a time delay until the second eye is operated on and during this time you may feel your eyes are unbalanced. For most patients this does not restrict their activities but for a small number of patients this could prevent them driving.
- Modern intra-ocular lenses are very good; however, none are able to give you crisp vision in all areas. You may find that you will still need to wear glasses to read, or for far distance. Your surgeon will discuss your needs and expectations before surgery in order to help you achieve what is best for you.

## What problems can occur with a cataract operation?

- Generally, cataract surgery is a very safe procedure. However, as with every surgical procedure, there are some

potential risks and complications. They are not very common, and most of them can be corrected with a second procedure or treatment. You will be asked to sign a consent form which details all potential problems which may occur following surgery.

- In some circumstances your vision may not improve, or may be worse after surgery. The chances of this occurring are small but the effect on your life may be significant.
- Most cases of reduced vision after surgery are transient, and things generally settle with additional treatment over the course of a couple of months
- Rarely you may suffer a bleed inside the eye which may result in total, permanent blindness in the eye, this is extremely rare (less than 1 in 3,000 cases).
- We usually aim to complete your cataract surgery in one operation; however, very rarely (less than 1 in 200 cases) your surgeon may decide during the surgery that you will need further surgery to complete the procedure. This may be in order to place a different sort of plastic lens into the eye, or to have surgery to the back part of the eye.

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The Trust cannot accept any responsibility for the accuracy of the information given if the leaflet is not used by Royal Devon staff undertaking procedures at the Royal Devon hospitals.

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