

Cataracts and their treatment

Information for patients

Ophthalmic Service's Philosophy of Care

We Aim to Work as a Team to Provide a High Standard of Care

We refer to a multi-disciplinary team comprising of all grades of nursing staff together with clerical and medical staff.

We aim to ensure that the patient/client enjoys a high standard of nursing care at all times. Our role is to regard each patient/client as an individual, giving consideration to his/her physical, psychological, emotional and social needs.

We aim to apply specialist knowledge, to educate the patient/client also the relative/carer through effective communication both verbal and visual.

We will respect a person's religious beliefs, personal preference and ensure confidentiality at all times.

We aim to achieve a quality service which will benefit the patient/client. Improve the well being of other members of the team and so enhance efficient running of the Centre.

We constantly aim to improve our standards and would appreciate your comments about our service.

This leaflet has been produced to give you information about cataracts. We hope it will help you and your recovery. It is not a complete guide, so if you have any questions or you require further explanations please do not hesitate to ask a member of staff who is caring for you.

What is a cataract?

A cataract is a clouding of the lens of the eye. This causes the eyesight to gradually deteriorate. Most cataracts are part of the normal ageing process, they can also be caused by injury, diabetes or medications.

Other factors can cause a deterioration in vision, your eye will be examined before any operation is performed, to rule out any other problems that may exist.

Even if other problems exist a cataract extraction can still be carried out to improve the eyesight to its best possible level, and stop the progress of any further deterioration of sight that is due to the developing cataract.

What are the symptoms?

Cataracts usually develop in both eyes, patients complain of blurred vision, colours becoming dim, printed images seem distorted or glare becomes a problem.

Itching, pain or redness are not symptoms associated with cataracts and you should get some medical advice should any of these symptoms happen to you.

How can cataracts be treated?

At the moment there is no known way of preventing cataracts, and the only treatment is to surgically remove the affected lens. Cataract surgery has become a relatively

routine and safe operation. Recent improvements in microsurgical techniques offer encouraging results to the cataract sufferer.

In order to restore satisfactory vision, a replacement for the lens must be provided. The replacement used is an intraocular lense.

What are intraocular lenses?

An intraocular, or implanted lens is the most effective method of restoring vision. The implanted lens offers many advantages over glasses and contact lenses. First magnification is at a natural level, and they give full peripheral vision.

The lens is placed inside the eye at the end of a routine cataract operation and is left there permanently and never has to be put in or taken out by the patient.

Are there any alternatives?

No, there are no alternatives to the three methods listed above.

Will I need an anaesthetic?

Most cataracts are removed **under local anaesthetic**. This involves a small injection around the eye which will then numb the eye. Some patients experience a slight stinging sensation at the back of the eye during the first 10 seconds of the injection. The operation itself is therefore completely pain free. The use of local anaesthetic means that you cannot move your eye (this is important to enable the operation to be done safely and

efficiently) and also blanks out your vision in that eye during the operation.

Topical anaesthesia – this is where the eye is numbed with local anaesthetic eye drops – it numbs the eye and makes the operation painless but it does not prevent you moving your eye. This means that you need to be able to cooperate with the surgeon and keep your eye very still during the operation. You will need to discuss this with the surgeon before your operation, if this is your choice of anaesthesia.

General anaesthesia is when you are put to sleep. It is only used in exceptional circumstances as it carries increased risks to the patient. You will need an anaesthetic assessment before this can be carried out. If you are unsure please discuss this with the nurse.

What are the risks and complications?

Regardless of the procedure used and the care taken, there is always the possibility of complications. These are relatively rare and when they do occur, the condition can usually be corrected. However, unexpected serious complications such as infection or inflammation can occur and cause a permanent decrease in vision. These complications are rare, but it is important that you are aware of the possibility.

Prior to surgery you will be asked to sign a medical consent form for your operation indicating that you understand your diagnosis, the surgical procedure which you are about to undergo and the possibility of complications.

What happens after the operation?

Normal life can be resumed immediately, remember to avoid lifting and straining. Keep your shield on until the next day, and for two weeks after your operation wear your shield on a night to protect your eye. You will need to use surgical tape to help keep your eye patch in place once you are home which can be purchased from any chemist.

Healing takes approximately 2-8 weeks, sometimes it will take that long for the vision to improve. It is possible that your vision will be blurred for a time and not as good as you expected, so try not to be too disappointed if this is the case. Sometimes Laser treatment is all that is needed to clear the vision, this is a short painless procedure.

Drops

You will have to put drops in for up to 28 days after the operation. Full instructions will be given but remember to:

- Always wash your hands before and after putting in the drops
- Always shake the bottle
- Don't let the bottle touch the eye
- Keep using the drops until the doctor or nurse tells you otherwise
- If you are worried about how to put your eye drops in, tell the nurse. It is important that you put them in as prescribed by the Doctor.

*If you are unable to have any one to help you putting your drops in, then something called an 'auto dropper' can make the task easier. These can be purchased from all good Pharmacies such as Boots or Lloyds before coming into hospital.

When should I go to the optician?

Please make an appointment 4 weeks after your operation.

What should I do if I have pain or problems after the operation?

If you have any pain in your eye take what you would normally take for pain, e.g. Paracetamol or Aspirin. If there is a sudden deterioration in your vision, or you are worried about anything at all, please contact the eye centre for advice.

Cleansing the eye

Cleanse only if necessary. Close the eyelids and gently wipe with cotton wool and cooled boiled water. When washing your hair avoid getting shampoo in the eye.

Work, housework, cooking and gardening

Avoid heavy straining and lifting for the first two weeks. Otherwise carry on as normal taking care not to knock the eye.

When can I drive?

It is best to avoid driving until your first out patient appointment, when you can ask if your vision is good enough to resume.

Glasses

After your operation you can wear your present spectacles (or dark glasses) if they help. You will probably need a change of spectacles about 6-8 weeks after your operation. You will need to go to the Optician for this, the doctor will advise you when.

Stitches

You will not usually have stitches in your eye, if for some reason it has been necessary to put stitches in, these will stay where they are unless they cause difficulties. If you have stitches and they start to give you problems consult your G.P who will send you back to the hospital if necessary. The removal of stitches is painless.

Who do I contact for further help and advice?

Please contact the hospital where you had your treatment.

Boothroyd Day Care

Dewsbury Hospital 01924 816155

Pinderfields Day/ Short Stay Unit 01924 541854

Pontefract Day Unit 01977 747547

Waiting List office (operations) 01924 214152

or 01977 747547

Eye Condition advice 01924 816027

Useful information can be found at:

NHS Choices - www.nhs.uk

You may find other useful information on our website: www.midyorks.nhs.uk

We are committed to providing high quality care. If you have a suggestion, comment, complaint or appreciation about the care you have received, or if you need this leaflet in another format please contact the Patient Advice and Liaison Service on:01924 542972 or email:pals@midyorks.nhs.uk
To contact any of our hospitals call:0844 811 8110
To book or change an appointment call:0844 822 0022

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