



## So what should I do?

It is important to understand that just because you have some cataract it does not mean that you have to have a cataract operation. The time to have an operation is when **you** feel your vision is causing enough problems to accept the small degree of risk that is involved in surgery.

The results of cataract surgery are the same if you operate at an early stage as if you wait and have surgery at a later stage, so there is no great benefit in operating sooner than you feel necessary.

If you decide that your sight is not causing enough problems to need an operation just now, it is likely that the cataract will become cloudier with time, but it may do this very slowly over a number of years. In a few people, it can become cloudier quickly, over a number of months. There is no way of predicting the speed of progression, but it has no effect on the eventual operation.

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# Cataracts

## What is a cataract?

Inside everybody's eye there is a small lens that focuses the picture in the eye. When you are young, this lens is crystal clear, but as we get older, the lens tends to become cloudier, which makes the picture inside the eye cloudier too. It can also cause problems with glare in bright light or make you increasingly short-sighted.

## **What can be done about it?**

Anyone over the age of about sixty is likely to have a degree of cloudiness of the lens of the eye, but this does not cause any harm to the eye. If it is causing so much blurring of your vision that it is preventing you from doing those things you want to do, or need to do, then it is possible to carry out an operation to remove the natural lens from inside the eye and replace it with a clear plastic lens, to try to improve the quality of your vision. This operation is called a cataract extraction and lens implant.

## **What does a cataract operation involve?**

The operation takes about half an hour and is usually performed under local anaesthetic, so you are fully conscious, but the eye is numbed so you do not feel any pain. This means that most patients don't need to stay in hospital overnight, but you should be prepared to stay at the hospital all day on the day of your treatment.

During the operation the cloudy lens is removed from inside the eye and an implant lens is inserted in its place. This is done through an incision in the clear window of the eye, which is usually small enough to seal itself without stitches.

## **After surgery**

It takes about six weeks for the eye to recover fully from the operation. After about four weeks it is usually necessary to change your glasses to get the full benefit of the operation. Sometimes it can be necessary to change your glasses again later.

## **Are there any risks with surgery?**

All operations carry risks of complications and cataract surgery is no different. About 97% of people who have a cataract operation can see better afterwards, but two or three times out of 100 problems can arise that leave your vision worse. Usually it is only slightly worse, but about one time in 1000 a serious complication can occur that can leave you with no sight at all in the operated eye. It does not happen often but it is serious if it does.

Less serious complications can often be treated, but this can involve additional operations.

Overall, cataract surgery is very successful in improving most people's vision so this information is not intended to put you off seeking surgery if your sight is causing significant problems in your daily life.