

Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

Please contact us if you need general information or advice about Trust services. www.bartshealth.nhs.uk/pals

Large print and other languages

For this leaflet in large print, please speak to your clinical team.
For help interpreting this leaflet in other languages, please ring 020 8223 8934.

Te informacje mogą zostać na żądanie przedstawione w formatach alternatywnych, takich jak łatwy do czytania lub duża czcionka, i w różnych językach. Prosimy o kontakt pod numerem 02082238934.

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Bu bilgiler, okuması kolay veya büyük baskılar gibi alternatif biçimlerde ve talep üzerine alternatif dillerde de sunulabilir. İrtibat için lütfen 02082238934 numaralı telefondan ulaşın.

اس معلومات کو متبادل شکل، جیسے، پڑھنے میں آسان یا بڑے حروف، میں دستیاب کرایا جا سکتا ہے، اور درخواست کرنے پر اسے متبادل زبان میں بھی دستیاب کرایا جا سکتا ہے۔ براہ مہربانی 02082238934 پر رابطہ کریں۔

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Switchboard: 020 3416 5000

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Patient information

Cataract and cataract surgery

Ophthalmology



What is a cataract?

A cataract is the clouding of the lens within the eye. When this happens the vision becomes blurred making it difficult to carry out the usual visual tasks such as reading.

One or both eyes may be affected. As the cataract develops you may notice any of the following symptoms;

- Blurred/misty vision
- Washed out colours
- Glare or dazzle with lights

What causes a cataract?

In most cases it is age related. In younger people it can occur due to a number of reasons such as trauma, diseases such as diabetes, or previous surgery.

Treatment

The only treatment is surgery to remove the lens. In most cases an artificial lens (implant) is then inserted. A cataract operation can be performed at any stage of their development, and in most cases a cataract is not harmful and can be left if you feel you do not have a problem with your vision.

If you have cataracts in both eyes, we will operate on one eye at a time.

Surgery is only considered if the reduction in vision interferes with your everyday activities such as reading or driving.

Contacts for queries and concerns:

Eye Treatment Centre – Eye Casualty

Opening Hours: Monday to Friday 9am-4.30pm

Whipps Cross University Hospital (WXH)

Telephone: 0208 539 5522

Extension: 6803/6515

Accident & Emergency (WXH)

Via main switchboard

0208 539 5522

Accident & Emergency (Newham Hospital)

Via main switchboard

0208 474 4000

Other useful contacts:

RNIB: Helpline: 0303 123 9999

Royal College of Ophthalmologists
0207 935 0702

Risks and complications of surgery

Cataract surgery is successful in the majority of patients, but as with all surgery, there are risks.

Most complications are minor and can be resolved at the time of surgery but serious complications though uncommon can permanently damage your eye and eyesight.

- 1:1000 risk of severe and permanent visual loss due to a bleed inside the eye or infection.
- 1:100 risk of requiring additional surgery to correct a problem such as dropped lens
- 1 in 20 posterior capsule rupture; tearing of the lens capsule with disturbance of the gel within the eye
- Less than 1 in 10 need laser treatment due to a thickening of a membrane behind the lens after 2 years
- 1 in 100 swelling (macula oedema) of the retina.

If you have any questions or concerns, please ask the doctor or nurse at your next appointment.

Pre assessment clinic

All the information about your eye and general health is collected at this appointment, including your medications and any allergies you may have.

You will be seen by a nurse and undergo all the necessary tests needed for surgery. This will be done prior to the operation date.

Special measurements of the eye called biometry are done to determine the strength of the lens implant to be used and also general health tests such as blood tests and ECG may be carried out as necessary.

At this appointment you will also be given instructions on how to prepare for your surgery.

Contact lens

If you wear contact lenses you will need to stop wearing them before your assessment, for the time specified below depending on the type of lens you have.

Soft	48 hours
Rigid gas permeable	4 weeks
Hard (PMMA)	6 weeks
Scleral lenses	2 months

Most patients have cataract surgery as a day case procedure. This means that you are admitted to hospital, have your operation and are discharged all on the same day.

Surgery

The most common technique used to remove the cataract is called phacoemulsification. The surgery usually takes up to 30 minutes.

This involves a small incision in the eye. The cataract is then removed with an ultrasound probe and a lens implant inserted in the eye in order to help focus the vision. The small incision usually heals without requiring stitches.

Most patients having their cataract removed have the operation under local anaesthetic, using eye drops only or an injection around the eye. This means you are awake for the procedure but the eye is numb.

The surgeon uses an operating microscope to carry out the operation. You will have to lie flat and still for the duration of the operation. A sterile drape will partially cover your face. You will not be able to see what is happening, but will hear noises from the machinery and see a bright light.

After the operation the eye is usually covered with a pad or clear shield. You will be taken back to the admission area and given light refreshment.

Your eye may feel sore once the local anaesthetic wears off, this is usually mild and you can take simple analgesia such as paracetamol.

Some people notice an improvement in the vision immediately. Your eye usually settles two – four weeks after the operation.

Surgery

You will be given eye drops to use for up to two months; to reduce inflammation and help reduce the risk of infection. Your post-operative eye drops and instruction will be given to you by the nurse before you are discharged.

Some patients are required to return the next day following their operation OR you will need to attend an outpatient review 2-4 weeks after your surgery

When to change your glasses

You will need to change your glasses after the operation and you will probably not see clearly for reading until the glasses are changed.

Post-operative side effects

Your eye may feel scratchy and look blood shot for a few days after the operation. The vision should gradually improve. If any of the following warning signs and symptoms develop contact the hospital or your GP promptly:

- Decreasing vision
- Increasing eye pain
- Increasing eye redness
- Increasing eye lid swelling
- Sticky discharge