BUNBURY & BUSSELTON EYE SPECIALISTS

PATIENT INFO AND ADVICE

Cataract Surgery

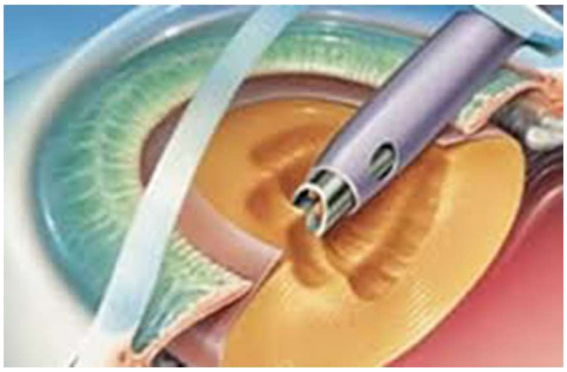
A cataract is a clouding of the eye's naturally clear lens. The lens focuses light rays on the retina (the layer of light-sensing cells lining the back of the eye) to produce a sharp image of what we see. When the lens becomes cloudy, light rays cannot pass through it easily and vision is blurred

How can a cataract be treated?

A cataract may not need to be treated if your vision is only slightly blurry. Simply changing your eyeglass prescription may help to improve your vision for a while.

There are no medications, eye drops, exercises or glasses that will cause cataracts to disappear or to prevent them from forming. Surgery is the only way to remove a cataract. When you are no longer able to see well enough to do the things you like to do, cataract surgery should be considered.

In cataract surgery, the cloudy lens is removed from the eye through a surgical incision. In most cases, the natural lens is replaced with a permanent intraocular lens (IOL) implant.



What can I expect if I decide to have cataract surgery?

To determine if your cataract should be removed, your ophthalmologist will perform an eye examination. Before surgery, your eye will be measured to determine the proper power of the intraocular lens that will be placed in your eye. Ask your ophthalmologist if you should continue taking your usual medications before surgery. You should make arrangements to have someone drive you home after surgery.

The Day of Surgery

Surgery is usually done on a day care basis in hospital.

When you arrive for surgery, you will be given eye drops. A local anaesthetic will numb your eye. The skin around your eye will be thoroughly cleansed, and sterile coverings will be placed around your head. You may see light and movement, but you will not be able to see the surgery while it is happening.

Under an operating microscope, a small incision is made in the eye. In most cataract surgeries, tiny surgical instruments are used to break apart and remove the cloudy lens from the eye. The back membrane of the lens (called the posterior capsule) is usually left in place.

A plastic, acrylic or silicone intraocular lens is implanted in the eye to replace the natural lens that was removed.

After surgery is completed, your doctor may place a shield over your eye. After a short stay in the outpatient recovery area, you will be ready to go home.

FOLLOWING SURGERY

You will need to:

- Use the eye drops as prescribed;
    - Maxidex four times a day for two weeks, then twice a day for the next two weeks
    - Chlorsig four times a day for two weeks.
- Be careful not to rub or press on your eye;
- Ask your doctor when you can begin driving;
- Wear eyeglasses or an eye shield, as advised by your doctor.

You can continue most normal daily activities. Over-the-counter pain medication may be used, if necessary.

Lasers are not used in cataract removal surgery. However, the lens capsule (the part of the eye that holds the lens in place) sometimes becomes cloudy several months or years after the original cataract operation. If the cloudy capsule blurs your vision, your ophthalmologist can perform a second procedure using a laser.

This procedure, called a posterior capsulotomy, uses a laser to make an opening in the cloudy lens capsule, restoring normal vision.

The success rate of cataract surgery is excellent. Improved vision is achieved in the majority of patients if other vision problems are not present.

Though they rarely occur, possible serious complications of cataract surgery are:

- Infection;
- Bleeding;
- Swelling of the retina (CMO)
- Detachment of the retina.

Call your ophthalmologist to attend the surgery (9-5 Monday to Friday) or BRH ED if out of hours, if you have any of the following symptoms after surgery:

- Pain not relieved by non-prescription pain medication;
- Loss of vision;
- Nausea, vomiting or excessive coughing;
- Injury to the eye.

Even if cataract surgery is successful, some patients may not see as well as they would like. Other eye problems such as macular degeneration (aging of the retina), glaucoma or diabetic retinopathy may limit vision after surgery. Even with these problems, cataract surgery may still be worthwhile.

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