

Mr. P Viswanathan
MS MRCOphth MRCSEd FRCOphth
Cataract & Vitreoretinal Surgeon
www.drviswa.com
www.darwineyeconsultants.com

Secretary: **Francesca Hogan**
Tel: **07307 22 77 22**
Email: secretary@darwineyeconsultants.com

Correspondence & Consulting Room

Mr. P Viswanathan
Nuffield Health Shrewsbury Hospital
Longden Road, Shrewsbury
SY3 9DP
Ph – 01743 598039

CATARACT SURGERY INFORMATION LEAFLET

This leaflet gives you information that will help you decide whether to have cataract surgery. You might want to discuss it with a relative or carer. Before you have the operation, you will be asked to sign a consent form and so it is important that you understand the leaflet before you decide to have surgery. If you have any questions, do not hesitate to ask me.

The Cataract

I have recommended cataract surgery because the lens in your eye has become cloudy, making it difficult for you to see well enough to carry out your usual daily activities. If the cataract is not removed, your vision may stay the same, or it may get worse. Waiting for a longer period of time until you decide to have surgery does not normally make the operation more difficult.

Cataract surgery

The purpose of the operation is to replace the cloudy lens (cataract) with a plastic lens (implant) inside your eye.

Cataract surgery is usually carried out under a local anaesthetic. With a local anaesthetic you will be awake during the operation. You will not be able to see what is happening, but you will be aware of a bright light. Just before the operation you will be given eye insert/drops to enlarge the pupil. After this, you will be given an anaesthetic to numb the eye. This may consist simply of eye-drops or may involve the injection of local anaesthetic solution into the tissue surrounding the eye. During the operation you will be asked to keep your head still, and lie as flat as possible. The operation normally takes 15-20 minutes, but may take up to 45 minutes. A nurse can hold your hand the whole time to make sure that you are all right. Most cataracts are removed by a technique called phacoemulsification. A small cut is made in the eye, the lens is softened with sound waves and removed through a small tube. The back layer of the lens is left behind. An artificial lens (implant) is then inserted to replace the cataract. Sometimes a small stitch is put in the eye.

After the operation

If you have discomfort, you may take the recommended dose of a pain reliever such as Paracetamol. It is normal to feel itching, sticky eyelids, mild discomfort and redness of the eye for a while after cataract surgery. Some fluid discharge is common. After 1-2 days even mild discomfort should disappear. In most cases, healing will take about two to six weeks after which new glasses can be prescribed.

You will be given eye drops to reduce inflammation. The hospital staff will explain how and when to use them. Please don't rub your eye. Certain symptoms could mean that you need prompt treatment. Please contact hospital immediately if you have any of the following symptoms:

- Excessive pain
- Worsening vision – especially if vision improves initially, but then starts to reduce
- Increasing redness and swelling of the eye

Likelihood of better vision

After the operation you may read or watch TV almost straight away, but your vision may be blurred. The healing eye needs time to adjust so that it can focus properly with the other eye, especially if the other eye has a cataract. The vast majority of patients have improved eyesight following cataract surgery.

What is the likelihood of your vision improving?

After cataract surgery there is approximately:

- 95% chance of better vision (better if you have no other associated eye problems)
- 5 % chance of no improvement or deterioration in vision due to complications of surgery

Please note that if you have another condition such as diabetes, glaucoma, or age-related macular degeneration your quality of vision may still be limited even after successful surgery.

Benefits and risks of cataract surgery

The most obvious benefits are greater clarity of vision and improved colour vision. Because lens implants are selected to compensate for existing focusing problems, most people find that their eyesight improves considerably after surgery. However, most patients need to wear glasses for distance vision or close work following the operation.

You should be aware that there is a small risk of complications, either during or after the operation.

Some possible complications during the operation

- Tearing of the back part of the lens capsule with disturbance of the gel inside the eye, which may sometimes result in reduced vision.
- Loss of all or part of the cataract into the back of the eye requiring a further operation, which may require a general anaesthetic.
- Bleeding inside the eye.

Some possible complications after the operation

- Allergy to the medication used.
- Bruising of the eye or eyelids.
- High pressure inside the eye.
- Clouding of the cornea.
- Incorrect strength or dislocation of the implant.
- Swelling of the retina (macular oedema).
- Detached retina, which can lead to loss of sight.
- Infection in the eye (endophthalmitis), which can lead to loss of sight, or even the eye.

Complications are rare and, in most cases, can be treated effectively. In a small proportion of cases, further surgery may be needed. The risk of this happening is approximately 1 in 300. Very rarely some complications can result in blindness. Overall, the risk of severe loss of vision in the affected eye is about 1 in 1000.

Posterior capsule opacification is the most frequent problem following cataract surgery. It may come on gradually after months or years. When this happens, the back part of the lens capsule, which was left in the eye to support the implant, becomes cloudy. This prevents light from reaching the retina and it is treatable. If this happens, I use a laser beam to make a small opening in the cloudy membrane in order to improve the eyesight. This is a painless outpatient procedure, which normally takes only a few minutes. The risk can be as high as 10% but is generally much less with modern implants.

Some common changes in vision (as opposed to complications) after cataract surgery

Your spectacles will need to be changed. You will still need spectacles for “best vision” either for distance or reading although 80% of patients will be able to manage without glasses for either distance or reading providing this is what was agreed before surgery - the spectacles in use for the other eye may prohibit this as the eyes must be “in balance” after surgery. Also 20% of patients will have an end result that will not permit good vision without glasses due to pre-existing astigmatism or imprecision in the measurements taken to determine implant power (currently only 90% of estimates are within 1 dioptre (unit of spectacle power) of the target). After phacoemulsification surgery temporary glasses can be obtained 2-3 days after surgery but these will only be of value until your permanent spectacle prescription is given at 3-4 weeks after surgery; change in the spectacles is rarely needed after 4 weeks although late changes sometimes occur during the late healing phase of the operation.

Other changes in vision

Floaters are much easier to see or may develop after cataract surgery. Although floaters can be a nuisance, they do not affect the sharpness of vision and most patients soon learn to ignore them. Colours will seem very bright and vivid.

Anaesthetic Choice

Local anaesthetic (in which you are awake, but your eye is numb) is the method of choice for most patients as it allows rapid recovery with minimal risk to your general health. Local anaesthetic may consist simply of eye-drops or may involve the injection of local anaesthetic solution into the tissue surrounding the eye. A very small number of patients choose general anaesthetic, where you are asleep.

<https://viswa.uk/cataract-surgery>

