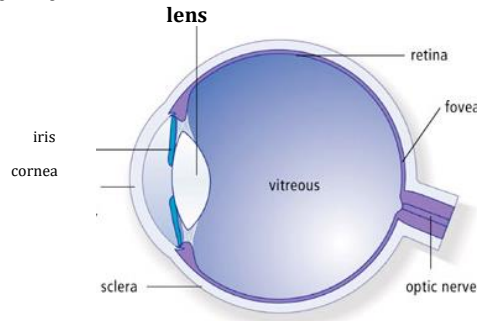


CATARACT SURGERY

What is a cataract?

Inside your eye, there is a naturally occurring lens which lies behind the pupil. It helps you to see by focussing light onto the retina. This lens is normally crystal clear.



A lens which is not transparent is called a cataract. A cataract causes a reduction in the quality of vision.

Why does cataract develop?

The lens continues to grow and get thicker throughout life. Therefore, a cataract develops as part of a normal ageing process. Most cataracts that we see would not have developed due to an illness or disease.

Rarely, cataracts can form due to diseases such as diabetes, medications such as corticosteroids, injuries to the eye or even present at birth.

What are the symptoms of cataract?

These vary from person to person. Some common symptoms are blurred vision, glare and sensitivity to light, and difficulties with night driving. Sometimes a cataract can cause short sightedness (called a myopic shift). A cataract does not usually cause eye pain or redness.

When should I have cataract surgery?

A mild cataract does not require surgery. Cataracts progress at different rates for different people. When a cataract starts to interfere with your activities such as reading or driving, it can be removed by an operation. It cannot be treated with dietary change, exercise, eye drops or medication.

What is involved in cataract surgery?

3 days before the operation you will need to start on anti-inflammatory drops to prepare your eye for surgery. You will get a prescription for this medication. You do not need to stop any of your usual medications, including any blood thinning medications.

A cataract operation is done as a Day Procedure, which means that you will have the operation and go home on the same day.

It is normally done under sedation and local anaesthetic, although you can request for a general anaesthetic (be put to sleep). You may need to discuss this with Dr Gajus and your anaesthetist.

In the operation, your cataract will be removed, and a clear artificial lens will be inserted into your eye to replace it. It will then remain in the eye indefinitely. In most cases, Dr Gajus will be using Alcon's Acrysof intraocular lens. This is the most commonly implanted lens in the world with a proven track record for safety and efficacy.

Afterwards you will have a patch over your eye overnight. You will need to come back for a check up the next morning. Dr Gajus will give you further instructions on how to look after your eye. You will then need to put in eye drops for 4 weeks. You will see Dr Gajus again after that.

What are the risks?

Generally speaking, most cataract operations are straight forward. Most patients can see better by the next day, although you should not plan to drive for at least a week afterwards. A small percentage of people might have minor complications such as bruising, bleeding, infection, or inflammation but they usually recover well. The risk of a serious complication such as failure of surgery, the need for a second operation, loss of vision, and the loss of an eye is rare but not zero. There is a 1/14,000 chance of the other eye being inflamed (sympathetic ophthalmia). Dr Gajus does not give you a 100% guarantee of success, but most people are very happy with the result of surgery.

Will I need glasses afterwards?

During your consultation, Dr Gajus will take measurements of your eye to choose the lens size most appropriate for your eye.

Dr Gajus aims to allow you to see well in the distance. Most of the time, this can be achieved. However, sometimes when there are other conditions besides cataract (such as astigmatism, glaucoma or macular degeneration), this might not be possible.

You might still require reading glasses after the operation. This is because the focus of the lens implant is fixed. It does not allow for "automatic zooming" or accommodation.

There are other intraocular lenses that can treat astigmatism or act like a multifocal glasses lens, which may help you to read without glasses. Not every eye is suitable for these 'premium' lenses. They also cost more and are not generally offered in the public hospital. They may be covered by your private insurer. If you are interested in discussing these options with Dr Gajus, please let her know.