

Ophthalmology: Cataract

Guidance for patients

March 2022



Cataract

Introduction

The Ophthalmology department treats patients for various eyes conditions. NWAngliaFT offer appointments at all 3 hospital sites. An ophthalmologist treats people of all ages, from premature babies to the elderly. Conditions dealt with in ophthalmology can include eye trauma, cataracts, diabetic eye conditions such as diabetic retinopathy, as well as congenital and genetic eye problems. Ophthalmologists diagnose, treat, and prevent disorders of the eyes and visual system, using medical and surgical skills.

A cataract is clouding or opacity of the lens inside the eye. It is useful to learn about how the eye works in order to understand what a cataract is. Inside the eye, behind the coloured part (the iris) with a black hole in the middle (the pupil), is the lens. In a normal eye, this lens is clear. It helps focus light rays on to the back of the eye (the retina), which sends messages to the brain allowing us to see. When a cataract develops, the lens becomes cloudy and prevents the light rays from passing through.

Guidance for Patients

Cataracts usually form slowly over years causing a gradual blurring of vision, which eventually is not correctable with glasses. In some people the vision can deteriorate relatively quickly. Developing a cataract can also cause glare, difficulty with night-time driving and multiple images in one eye which can affect the quality of the vision.

Frequently asked questions

Do cataracts spread from eye to eye? No. But often they develop in both eyes either at the same time or one after the other with a gap in between.

Are there different kinds of cataract? Yes. Most cataracts are age related, but other examples include congenital (present at birth), drug induced (steroids), and traumatic (injury to the eye).

Is there a link between diabetes and cataracts? Yes. Cataracts are more common in people who have certain diseases such as diabetes.

Do I need any special tests before the operation? Yes. Special tests are required to determine the strength of the lens implant which is inserted into the eye. These tests are done before the operation day, either at your first clinic attendance or during your booked pre- assessment appointment.

Prior to your special tests, if you wear contact lenses, you must leave them out for the following time unless told otherwise: 1 week for soft lenses, 2 weeks for any types of rigid lenses including gas permeable lenses.

At first, you might not be aware that a cataract is developing and initially it may not cause problems with your vision. Generally, as a cataract develops over time, you start to experience blurring of vision. In most cases, eyes with a cataract look normal but, if the cataract is advanced, your pupil may no longer look black and can look cloudy or white. You may need to get new prescription glasses more frequently when the cataract is developing. Eventually, when your cataract worsens, stronger glasses may no longer improve your sight and you might have difficulty seeing things even with your glasses on. Assessment of cataract Patients with cataracts are looked after by a team of people including optometrists (opticians), nurses, technicians, doctors, and surgeons. You will be asked about your sight problems, any other eye conditions, and your general health. Your vision will be tested, and measurements taken with specialist equipment, which will help us to make recommendations about the best treatment for your vision problem. You will be given eye drops to

make your pupil bigger, so that we can examine your eyes fully. The drops will blur your vision and the effect of the drops will take a few hours to wear off. For this reason, you are advised not to drive after your hospital appointments. You should also take care that you do not miss your footing and be very careful with steps while your vision is still blurred.

Healthy eating and being active

Information and advice on healthy eating and becoming more active is available from:

- One You Eat Better (website) - includes Easy Meals app for healthy meals and the Change4Life Food Scanner to help reduce levels of sugar in your diet.
- Better Health -Get Active (website) - includes tips on getting active for all, including the downloadable Active 10 app, as well as tailored advice for those living with a long-term condition

Find out your BMI

You can get help to lead a healthier lifestyle. If it's too high, sign up for a programme that will help you lose weight.

The NHS 12-week fitness plan will support your weight loss plan as well as improve your health. This is aimed at beginners and will help get you into the habit of regular exercise over the course of the programme. It is structured but flexible enough to allow you to fit the exercise sessions around your other weekly commitments.

What should I do if my health is deteriorating?

If you experience any of the following after surgery or are worried about your eye you must attend the clinic where you had your surgery or go to A + E or see your GP If you experience any of the following,

Increasing redness, pain, blurring of vision or yellow/green discharge. This can indicate a serious infection or inflammation, blurring of the central vision: This may indicate macular oedema (water logging of the central part of the retina), red sore eye after stopping drops: This can be due to a recurrence of post-operative inflammation inside the eye. Distorted vision: the implanted lens can move from its original position, causing distorted vision, though this is unusual. If this happens, you might need further surgery to reposition the displaced lens. Shadow, lights, or floaters in your field of vision: the most common cause of a shadow or lights in the peripheral vision is due to the different way that the light is focused on the retina through the new lens implant. Following the operation, you may become aware of a shadow to the side of your vision, often described as a 'half-moon' or 'crescent'. The effect is usually temporary as your eye rapidly adapts to the new lens.

Urgent Health Advice

For urgent health advice about physical or mental health, when it's not an emergency, please call 111 from any landline or mobile phone. You can also visit www.nhs.uk

The NHS 111 service is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Life Threatening Emergencies

For something life threatening –severe bleeding, breathing difficulties or chest pains –please dial 999.

Contact Us

Peterborough Hospital 01733 678000

Hinchingbrooke Hospital 01480 416416

Stamford 01733 678000