



GUIDE

The Ottawa Hospital

Cataract Surgery



The Ottawa Hospital | L'Hôpital
d'Ottawa



Disclaimer

This is general information developed by The Ottawa Hospital. It is not intended to replace the advice of a qualified healthcare provider. Please consult your own personal physician who will be able to determine the appropriateness of the information for your specific situation.

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Introduction

This booklet is intended to help you and your family understand cataracts and their treatment. We hope that by reading this, you will have a better understanding of cataract surgery and your role in making your surgery a success.

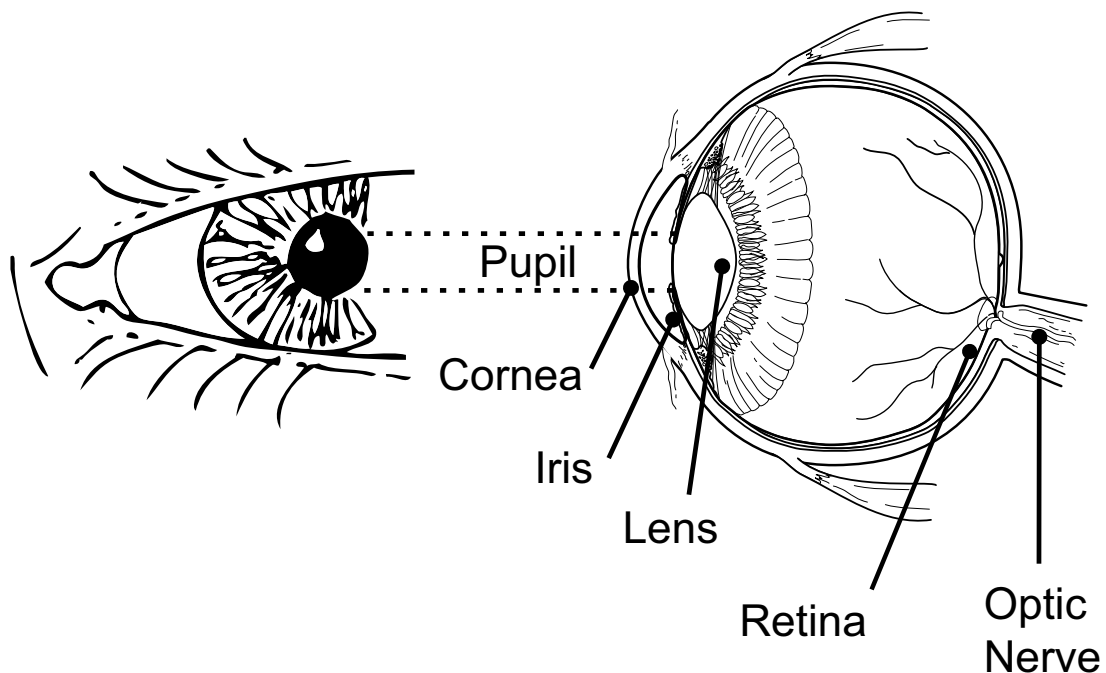
Cataract surgeries are performed on an outpatient basis at The Ottawa Hospital at 2 sites:

- At the **Eye Care Centre**, Riverside Campus
3rd floor, 1967 Riverside Drive, Ottawa K1H 7W9.

and

- At the University of Ottawa **Eye Institute**, General Campus
Critical Care Wing, 3rd floor, Module F,
501 Smyth Road, Ottawa, K1H 8L6.

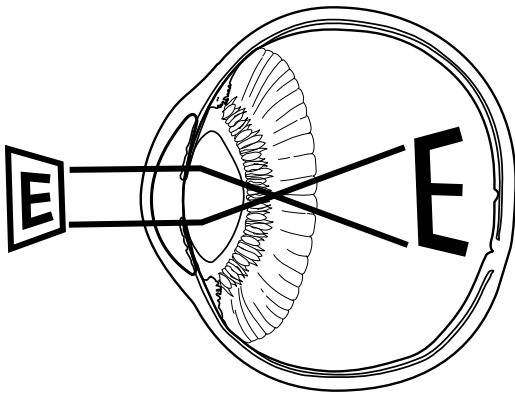
Most eye surgeons work at only one campus. Your eye surgeon will let you know where your surgery will be taking place.



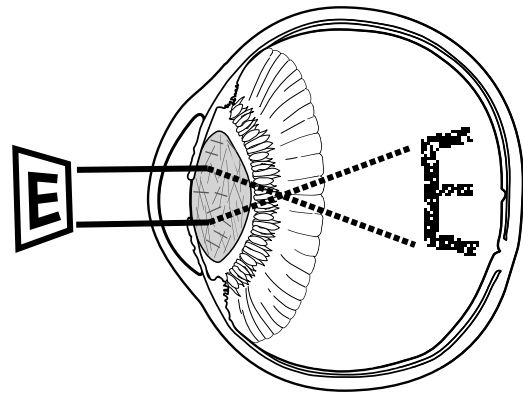
Side view of a normal eye

What is a Cataract?

A cataract is a clouding of the natural lens of the eye. Like a camera, the normal eye has a transparent lens that focuses images at the back of the eye. While the camera focuses the image on a film, the eye focuses the image on the retina. If the lens is cloudy, the image on the retina is not clear and the vision becomes blurry.



Normal eye



Eye with cataract

Vision with a cataract

Cataracts develop as we grow older. They are due to the aging process of the proteins contained in the natural lens. Cataracts may develop earlier:

- in people with diabetes or glaucoma
- following traumatic eye injuries
- following the intake of some medications (for example, steroids)
- with exposure to ultraviolet (UV) rays from the sun
- with smoking
- with poor nutrition.

In rare cases, cataracts are present at birth.

What are the Symptoms of Cataracts?

A cataract may develop rapidly over a few months or slowly over several years. The symptoms are:

- cloudy, blurred vision,
- changes in vision,
- better close vision for a while then difficulty with vision at all distances,
- sensitivity to light,
- difficulty driving at night because car lights seem too bright,
- glare from the sun or from lamps,
- halos around lights,
- double vision,
- pupil appearing white (very advanced stage).

In general, the cataract should be operated on when it interferes with your daily activities. If your vision decreases below the provincial driving standards, you will need to have the surgery. The decision to have surgery will be made between you and your eye surgeon.

Your Pre-Admission Appointment

After you have met with your surgeon, the hospital will contact you to book a “pre-admission assessment”. This appointment will occur at one of our Pre-admit Units, either at the Eye Care Centre at the Riverside Campus or at the Eye Institute at the General Campus. This appointment will take approximately 30 minutes.

You will meet with a Registered Nurse who will go over your medical history and important instructions regarding your preparation for the surgery.

Please bring with you for this appointment:

- all your current medications, vitamins, natural health remedies and eye drops in a bag
- your health card
- the name and phone number of your family doctor.

The Day before Surgery

The hospital will call you between 11:30 a.m. and 3 p.m. to confirm your surgery time the next day. Please be punctual to allow us time to prepare you for surgery. Calls for Monday's surgeries will be made on Fridays.

If you have not received a call by 3 p.m., please call the hospital:

- Eye Care Centre, Riverside Campus: 613-738-8381
- Eye Institute, General Campus: 613-737-8577

Notify your surgeon if you develop a cold, flu, infection, eye infection, cold sore, if you have a fever or if you are placed on antibiotics within 48 hours of your surgery.

Important Instructions before Your Surgery

1. A responsible adult **must** accompany you home after your surgery; your surgery will be **cancelled** if you do not have a ride.
 - Have the name and the phone number of this person on the day of surgery. We are sorry that we **cannot**, for legal reasons, let our patients go home alone by taxi.
2. The nurse from Pre-Admission will review our fasting policy with you. Please follow the instructions carefully.
 - No solid food after midnight the night before your surgery.
 - You are encouraged to drink **clear** fluids up to 2 hours before your surgery: Water, apple juice, cranberry juice, white grape juice, clear soft drinks (sprite, 7up, ginger ale) and black coffee and tea. Do **NOT** add milk, cream or Coffeemate **or your surgery will be cancelled.**
3. Medication Instructions on the Day of Surgery
 - You may take your usual medications on the morning of surgery **unless otherwise indicated by your surgeon.** You may take your medications with a sip of water, up to one hour before surgery.

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- It is **not** necessary to stop the following medications for cataract surgery: blood thinners like Coumadin, Pradaxa, anti-inflammatory drugs like Aspirin, ibuprofen (Advil)... **Continue to take them as prescribed, unless otherwise indicated by your surgeon.**
 - **If you are diabetic**, do **NOT** take your diabetic pills or insulin before surgery, but **bring them with you**:
 - Bring your inhalers (puffers) and nitroglycerin spray.
 - If you are taking **eye drops** prescribed by another doctor, inform your surgeon who will give you information on their use before surgery.
 - If your eye surgeon gave you a prescription to start eye drops 2 days before surgery, follow the instructions carefully. Keep your bottles for after the surgery.
4. **Do not smoke. Refrain from drinking alcohol** 24 hours before and after surgery in order to avoid any effects from the mixing of alcohol and the medications given to you.
 5. Do **not** bring any valuables with you on the day of surgery. Remove **all** your jewellery.
 6. Take a shower and wash your hair before surgery.
 7. Remove make-up, nail polish, scented products or perfume.
 8. We recommend that women wear a skirt or pants for their comfort.
 9. Do not sign legal papers up to 24 hours after surgery.
 10. **Plan to have the following appointments:**
 - **the day after surgery** (the time and appointment will be confirmed with you before you leave the hospital),
 - 7 to 10 days,
 - 1 month ,
 - and 3 months after surgery.
 11. If you are from out of town, you may wish to stay in Ottawa on the night of surgery. You can call Rotel at 613-733-1412 or 1-800-267-4700.
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Intraocular Lenses (IOL)

Before your surgery, your surgeon will require a test for “eye measurements”. These tests are called “**A-scan**” or “**IOL Master**”. The measurements obtained help your surgeon choose the correct power of the **intraocular lens (IOL)** for your eye. The IOL Master is not covered by the Ontario Health Insurance Plan (OHIP), therefore **a fee will be charged**.

The cost of the standard, foldable IOL is covered by OHIP. Patients from outside the province will have to pay for the IOL **before** surgery.

There is much talk about **specialty** intraocular lenses (IOL’s) these days. Some patients are candidates for these lenses while others are not. Ask your eye surgeon about your options. He/she is the best person to help you choose the correct type of lens for you.

Please note that **specialty lenses are not covered by OHIP or RAMQ**. These lenses must be paid **before** your surgery. If you decide to have a specialty lens, your surgeon’s office will give you a form with the amount to pay before surgery. You can pay this bill at the hospital cashier’s office or by phone at 613-737-8899 ext. 14444. **Please bring your receipt with you on the day of surgery**. The cashier’s offices are located near the main entrances at both campuses.

Private insurance may cover the costs of the IOL Master or of the specialty lenses, therefore please keep all your receipts.

On the Day of Surgery

Cataract surgery usually lasts from 15 to 45 minutes but plan to be at the hospital for approximately 2½ to 3 hours.

When you arrive at the hospital, you will be greeted by one of our clerks. You will then meet a nurse who will prepare you for surgery. The nurse will place several drops in your eye in order to prevent infection and to dilate your pupil (make it larger). Dilation of the pupil is essential and gives the surgeon better access to your cataract.

The nurses will verify your information more than once before your surgery. This is part of our safety process. We will ask your name a few times, whether or not you have allergies and on which eye the surgery will be performed.

At any point during your stay, do not hesitate to ask questions about your care.

The anesthesiologist or his/her assistant will meet you before you go into the operating room. You will receive medications through an intravenous line to help you relax. Your eye will be “frozen” with special drops and gel. You will be drowsy but awake during surgery and will not feel any pain. Please do not attempt to talk during surgery but gently lift your hand if you have a problem.

Cataract Surgery (“Phacoemulsification”)

The surgeon will make a very small incision on your cornea to gain access to the cataract. He/she will then insert an ultra-sonic probe to break the cataract into small pieces. These are removed with a vacuum-like system. This technique is called “phacoemulsification”. A foldable intraocular lens (IOL) implant is then inserted through the small incision and is placed behind the iris (the coloured portion of the eye). The implant is permanent and cannot be seen or felt. It does not require care. The wound is self-sealing. Sometimes a small suture is applied.

After Surgery, in the Day Care Area

You will be able to go home about 30 minutes after your surgery, once the effects of medications have worn off. The nurses in the Day Care area will monitor your blood pressure and pulse and offer you a light snack.

They will also provide you with written instructions. You play an important role in the success of your surgery. Follow them carefully. Most instructions are to prevent infection in your eye and displacement of the intraocular lens (IOL) implant.

These instructions are presented below.

Discharge Instructions after Cataract Surgery

Your eye after surgery:

- It is normal to have some discomfort in your eye, such as a mild foreign body sensation, for 1 to 2 days. We recommend over-the-counter pain medication (e.g. acetaminophen if you are not allergic to it).
- Your vision may be blurry for up to 2 to 3 days.
- Your eye may be slightly red for 1 to 2 days.

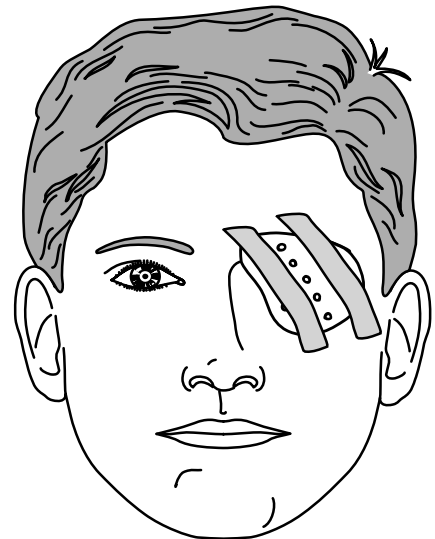
Eye drops:

Your surgeon will give you a prescription for eye drops if you did not receive one before surgery:

- **Start your eye drops when you get home.**
- If you have an eye patch, start your eye drops once the patch is removed or as indicated by your surgeon.

Eye Shield:

- You may be given a shield to wear at night and during naps. This will protect your eye while you sleep.
- Do **not** put anything underneath the shield (no gauze, no tissue).
- To fix the shield in place, apply 2 pieces of tape on the shield and place it over your eye area as indicated on the picture.
- While you are at the Pharmacy for your prescription, do not forget to **buy tape** to hold your shield in place at night.



***Proper placement
of eye shield***

Care of your operated eye:

- For a month after surgery, **do NOT rub** your eye.
- **Do NOT put pressure** on your eye (such as with your finger for example or by squeezing your eyelids).
- To clean your eye if necessary, start by washing your hands. Use a clean face cloth and warm tap water. Close your eye and clean the **lower eyelid only**. Start from the inner corner of your eye to the outer corner. Do not put pressure on your upper eyelid and do not rub.
- You may wash your hair and take a shower the day after surgery. Do not let the spray of the water or the soap go directly into your eye; close your eyes and protect your eye with your hand or a clean facecloth. Avoid hair spray.
- Do not apply eye makeup or mascara for 2 weeks.
- Do not swim with your head under water for 2 weeks.

Activities:

You may resume your normal activities as soon as you feel well. For about 2 weeks however, you must be careful with some activities:

- Avoid heavy lifting. Avoid straining. **The golden rule is:** If you have to hold your breath to do an effort, do NOT do it.
- Do not shake your head vigorously (when you dry your hair for example).
- You may resume sexual activity when you feel well, but some doctors prefer that you wait 2 weeks after surgery. Ask your surgeon for his/her advice.
- Do not drive until your ophthalmologist says it is safe to do so.
- You may pick up light objects from the floor but try to bend at the knees and not at the waist.
- You may do light housework (e.g. meals, and dishes).
- You may read and watch television.

Prescription Glasses:

- Typically, you will get your best vision one month after surgery. Experiences vary among individuals. Your doctor may then change your prescription glasses. Meanwhile, you can wear your old glasses if they are comfortable. If not, ask an optician to remove the lens of your glasses. You may wish to replace it with a clear lens until you get your new prescription.

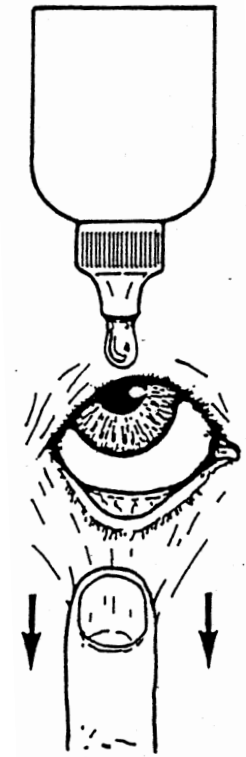
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- When putting your glasses on, hold them by the tip to prevent injury to your eye.
 - We recommend that you wear sunglasses on bright and sunny days.

How Do I Apply Eye Drops?

You will have to apply eye drops for a few weeks after surgery.

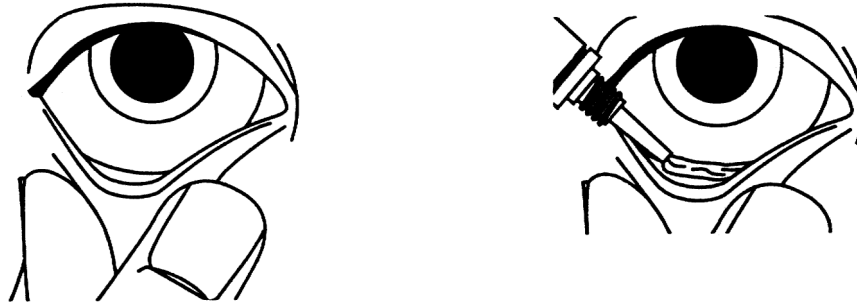
Here is how to proceed:

1. Wash your hands carefully.
2. Read the label to ensure you have the right medication.
3. You may put in your eye drops while lying down or sitting with your head tilted backwards.
4. Shake the bottle.
5. Pull down on your lower lid with one finger and look up.
6. Hold the bottle in the other hand and apply the drop. Do not let the eye dropper touch your eye.
7. Close your eye gently.
8. Wipe off the excess from your cheek.
9. Do not rub your eye.
10. Wait at least 3 to 5 minutes if you have another eye medication to take.
11. You do not have to wake up at night to take your eye drops. Just follow a regular daytime schedule.



How Do I Apply Eye Ointment?

Some surgeons prescribe eye ointment for the night time. Follow the procedure we have just described but make a pocket with your lower eyelid using your thumb and second finger. Apply approximately 1 to 2 cm of ointment. Twist the tube sharply in order to separate the ointment from the tube.



Application of eye ointment

Complications of Cataract Surgery

Although problems are very rare with cataract removal, all surgeries have potential for complications. The complications can be prevented or treated.

Please refer to your surgeon for more information.

Rare complications include:

- displacement of the lens within the eye
- infection of the eye (endophthalmitis)
- increased pressure in the eye (glaucoma)
- retinal detachment
- complications of anesthesia

“Secondary Cataracts”

Once a cataract is removed and an IOL is implanted, cataract surgery will not be needed again. However, a cloudy film may develop over time on the membrane that supports your IOL. This is known as a “secondary cataract”. It can be treated quite easily by laser during an office visit. This fast and painless procedure is called Laser Capsulotomy. Vision is restored quickly.

Emergencies

The following are considered emergencies:

- Your pain is not relieved with the over-the-counter pain medication.
- Your vision decreases suddenly.
- The redness increases in your eye.
- You experience severe vomiting (signs of increased eye pressure).

During business hours call your surgeon's office immediately or call the Campus where you had your surgery:

- Eye Care Centre, Riverside Campus: 613-738-8537 ext. 3
- Eye Institute, General Campus: 613-737-8575 or 613-737-8577

After hours, go directly to the Emergency Department at the General Campus. An ophthalmologist is always on-call:

501 Smyth Road, Ottawa, K1H 8L6

For more information on cataract surgery or specialty lenses, please visit the following website: www.cos-sco.ca

For an electronic version of this booklet, please visit: www.ottawahospital.on.ca

