
GENERAL INFORMATION

CATARACT & LENS SURGERY



vision
eye institute

WHAT IS A CATARACT?

A cataract is not a growth, but rather a clouding of the normally transparent and flexible lens of the eye. This condition usually develops over some time and interferes with light entering the eye, which affects a person's ability to see clearly. If left untreated, people with cataracts may eventually go blind. Both eyes may be affected, although not usually to the same extent.

What causes a cataract?

Cataracts are caused by the proteins in the eye's lens breaking down and clumping together. This is part of the ageing process, so it's normal for older people to develop cataracts.

Factors that increase the chance of developing cataracts include:

- Age (60+)
- Eye trauma
- Prolonged use of steroids
- Sun exposure
- Previous inflammation and infection in the eye
- Diabetes.

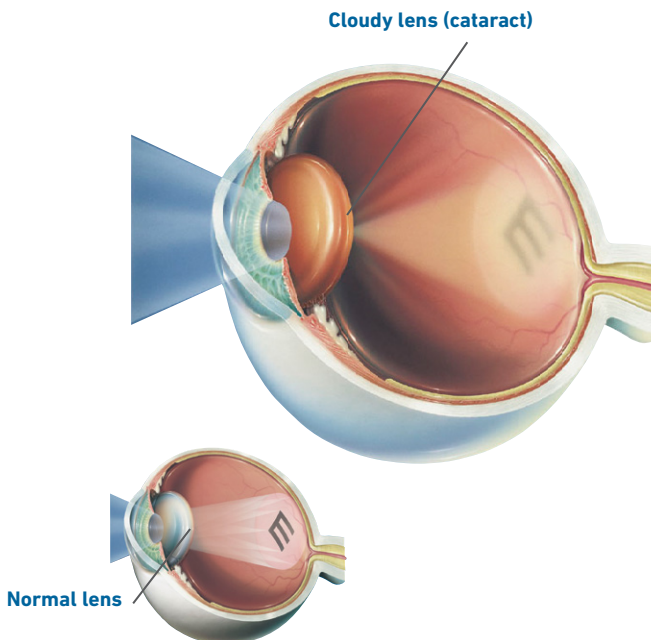


What are the symptoms of cataracts?

Cataracts are not painful and often don't cause noticeable changes in the early stages.

As the condition progresses, symptoms can include:

- Blurred, cloudy or dim vision
- Difficulty seeing at night or in low-light situations
- Being sensitive to bright lights and glare
- Seeing halos
- Needing stronger glasses and more frequently
- Colours appearing faded or yellow
- Double vision in the affected eye
- A whiteness through the pupil (late stage).



CAN CATARACTS BE TREATED?

Cataracts can be surgically treated by replacing the dysfunctional lens with an artificial one. These are known as a replacement lens or intraocular lens (IOL).

Early-stage symptoms can often be managed with a change in your glasses or contact lens prescription. Cataract surgery becomes necessary as vision becomes more impaired. However, you do not have to wait until then to have cataracts removed. For some people, subtle vision changes such as loss of contrast sensitivity may affect your quality of life (e.g. participation in hobbies that involve fine detail such as sewing and knitting).



CATARACT SURGERY IS ONE OF THE MOST FREQUENTLY PERFORMED SURGICAL PROCEDURES IN THE WORLD.



WHAT IS THE PROCESS FOR HAVING CATARACT SURGERY?

Your first appointment

Your initial consultation with one of our specialist cataract surgeons will take 1 to 2 hours and involves:

- A thorough eye exam to assess your suitability for surgery
- A discussion about which replacement lens best suits your needs (see p9), as well as the benefits and risks of surgery
- Scheduling your surgery. Cataracts are generally not removed at the same time – the operations are performed anywhere from 1 day to 2 weeks apart
- Providing detailed costs for the procedure, including any out-of-pocket costs not covered by Medicare and private health insurance.

It is strongly advised that you bring a referral from your GP or optometrist to:

- Inform your Vision Eye Institute surgeon of your visual symptoms
- Enable you to claim part of your fees as a rebate from Medicare and/or private health insurance (depending on your level of cover).



The surgery

At Vision Eye Institute, your procedure will be performed in one of our fully equipped, accredited, state-of-the-art day surgeries. You'll be in the day surgery for around 3 hours in total (including admission, preparation and recovery time). The operation itself takes less than 30 minutes.

The surgery involves:

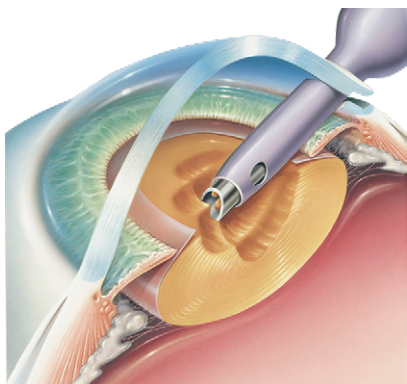
1. Administering a local anaesthetic to the eye(s)
2. Making a tiny 2–3 mm incision in the outermost layer of the eye (the cornea)
3. Making an incision in the 'bag' (capsule) containing the affected lens (cataract)
4. Breaking up the affected lens into smaller pieces with an ultrasound
5. Removing these pieces with a vacuum and polishing the lens capsule to clean it
6. Inserting and accurately positioning the replacement lens.

The new lens can't be felt once placed inside the eye. After cataract surgery, it is not possible to develop another cataract in that eye.

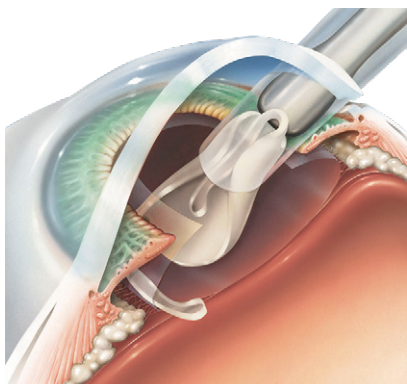
After surgery

Following cataract surgery, you will be:

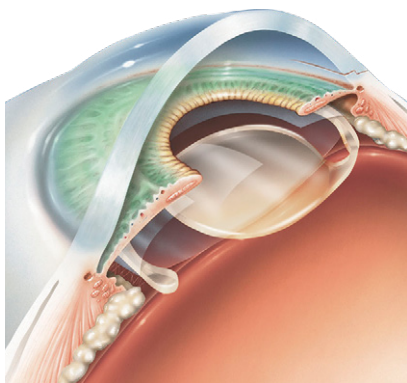
- Discharged and asked to rest for the remainder of the day
- Scheduled for a follow-up appointment
- Given medicated eye drops to use
- Advised to avoid strenuous activities and water in your eyes for the first few days.



**Cataract
removed**



**Clear lens
inserted**



**Clear lens
positioned**

TYPES OF SURGERY

LASER CATARACT SURGERY

Laser-assisted cataract surgery using the femtosecond laser is offered by some of our surgeons as their preferred method of cataract surgery. Visual outcomes are similar with all methods of surgery and are rarely dependent upon surgical technique.

REFRACTIVE LENS EXCHANGE

The same surgical procedure can be used as an alternative to laser eye surgery to correct vision (e.g. short-sightedness, long-sightedness, presbyopia and astigmatism), regardless of whether cataracts are present. If the person does not have cataracts, it is referred to as refractive lens exchange, clear lens surgery or lens replacement surgery.

The dysfunctional natural lens (with no cloudy cataract present) is removed and replaced with an artificial lens (see p9) to correct vision.

People under 45 are usually not suitable candidates for this type of procedure. This is because the body's natural lenses are better than any of the replacement lens options that are currently available.





REPLACEMENT LENS OPTIONS

Intraocular lenses

Intraocular lenses are made of soft, flexible plastic and are used to replace your body's natural lens. They can also be used to correct pre-existing refractive errors, such as short-sightedness, long-sightedness, presbyopia and/or astigmatism.

There are a number of replacement lens options available – the lens you choose will determine whether you still require glasses for certain activities following surgery.

- **Monofocal lenses** allow clear vision at a single distance (i.e. near/reading or far). Following surgery, glasses will still be required for certain tasks.
- **Multifocal lenses** allow clear focus at more than one distance but have a higher risk of visual side-effects (e.g. glare and halos around lights).
 - **Bifocal lenses** allow clear focus at two distances (near and far), but glasses are likely to be required for intermediate distances (e.g. computer work).
 - **Trifocal lenses** allow clear focus at three distances (near, intermediate and far). Glasses are often not required for standard daily activities following surgery.
- **Extended-depth-of-focus (EDOF) lenses** represent the latest in lens technology. In these lenses, a single focal point is stretched to increase the range of clear vision. After surgery, patients will typically have good unaided distance and intermediate vision, with functional near vision. Glasses may still be required for some near tasks. EDOF lenses have less issues with unwanted visual side-effects.
- **Toric lenses** are used to correct astigmatism.

Your ophthalmologist will discuss the advantages and disadvantages of each lens type and help you select the right one for your needs.



FAQs

When will I need cataract surgery?

In the early stages, some cataracts can be left untreated or managed with a stronger glasses prescription. When your sight deteriorates to a point where it interferes with your ability to carry out daily tasks (including seeing in low-light situations such as at night), it could be time to consider surgery.

What is the success rate?

Traditional or manual cataract surgery is considered one of the safest surgical procedures in the world today with a very high success rate. Laser cataract surgery may reduce the risk of complications even further for some patients.¹ Serious complications are rare with cataract surgery but may include endophthalmitis (infection of the eye), bleeding, retinal detachment, macular swelling and posterior capsular rupture.

How is the gap payment for cataract surgery determined?

Some, but not all, of the costs of cataract surgery are covered by Medicare and also by private health insurance (depending on the type of cover you have). The gap payment will depend on several factors, including your level of private health cover and the replacement lens option you choose.

How long before I can drive a car?

Driving is not recommended for the first few days after surgery to allow your eye to settle.





How long does it take to recover from cataract surgery?

Your sight will usually recover within days but typically fluctuates for about a month before stabilising. If you notice any significant reduction in your vision, tell your surgeon immediately. A protective shield is usually worn for the first day and your surgeon may also recommend the shield be used for the first few nights after the operation – this is usually the case if you can't stop rubbing your eyes. Cataract surgery does not usually involve stitches.

Normal daily activities such as light housework can be resumed within a couple of days. Check with your doctor if you plan to play contact sports.

Will I still need glasses after cataract surgery or lens exchange?

Today's replacement lenses can also be used to correct pre-existing vision problems due to short-sightedness, long-sightedness, presbyopia and/or astigmatism. There are different lens options available, and some may allow you to achieve clear vision without glasses.

Speak with your ophthalmologist to find out the best lens option for you. This will depend on your lifestyle, expectations and eye health, and your surgeon will help you understand what you can realistically expect to achieve.

Do you offer payment plans?

Vision Eye Institute patients can access interest-free, buy now pay later plans through LatitudePay (subject to approval). Before applying for any form of credit, always read the full terms and conditions.

REFERENCES

1. Levitz LM et al. The Latest Evidence with Regards to Femtosecond Laser-Assisted Cataract Surgery and Its Use Post 2020. Clin Ophthalmol. 2021;15:1357–1363.
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5. Porela-Tiihonen S et al. A prospective study on postoperative pain after cataract surgery. Clin Ophthalmol. 2013;7:1429–1435.

COMPREHENSIVE EYE CARE



To access our full range of brochures online, use the QR code above

Vision Eye Institute is the largest private provider of ophthalmic services in Australia. Our team of highly regarded doctors includes general ophthalmologists as well as those who specialise in specific areas/conditions of the eye.

**LASER EYE
SURGERY**



**CATARACT &
LENS SURGERY**



GLAUCOMA



**DIABETIC EYE
DISEASE**



**MACULAR
DEGENERATION**



**RETINAL
CONDITIONS**



KERATOCONUS



DRY EYE



PTERYGIUM



**CORNEAL
TRANSPLANTATION**



**CORNEAL
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**NERVE-RELATED
VISION PROBLEMS**



**RECONSTRUCTIVE
EYE SURGERY**



**CHILDREN'S
EYE HEALTH**



**GENERAL
EYE HEALTH**



OUR CATARACT CLINICS

For more information or to find a Vision Eye Institute clinic that offers cataract surgery, visit:

visioneyeinstitute.com.au/services/cataract-surgery

This information is general in nature. All medical and surgical procedures have potential benefits and risks. Consult your ophthalmologist for specific medical advice.



visioneyeinstitute.com.au



Transforming lives. That's our vision.