

Cataract FAQs

GENERAL

What are cataracts?

A cataract is the clouding and discolouration of the natural lens in your eye. Light entering your eye becomes scattered and blocked, preventing it from reaching the back of your eye, which interferes with your vision.

How do cataracts develop?

The natural lens in your eye is mainly made up of water and protein. These proteins are normally arranged so that light can pass through easily. As we get older, these proteins naturally become re-arranged and bunched up. When the proteins are bunched up, light cannot pass through as well and your lens becomes cloudy.

Why do cataracts develop?

The most common cause of cataracts is the normal aging process. As we grow older, the lens of the eye tends to gradually lose its clarity and become cloudy. The result is a decrease in the quality of vision. Other conditions such as diabetes and trauma to the eye can cause the cataract to develop more rapidly.

What is cataract surgery?

Cataract surgery is the only way a cataract can be removed. This surgery involves creating a very small opening through which the natural lens of your eye (which has become yellow and hardened) is removed. Once that lens is removed, it is replaced with a new clear intra-ocular lens (IOL) implant.

How do I know if I need cataract surgery?

The severity of your cataract will determine whether or not you need cataract surgery. In the early stages of the disease, you may be able to treat your symptoms using anti-glare sunglasses, brighter lighting, and magnifying lenses.

However, more serious cases require surgical treatment. Your eye care professional will likely recommend cataract surgery if your vision loss affects your everyday life. For example, your cataract may make it difficult to drive or look at computer and TV screens.

What is the success rate of cataract surgery?

Cataract surgery has one of the highest success rates of all surgeries. The National Library of Medicine reports that this procedure improves eyesight for 95% of patients.

How common are cataracts?

Virtually everyone develops cataracts to varying degrees as they get older. Because cataracts usually develop gradually, many people may not recognize how diminished and debilitated their vision is. If left untreated, cataracts will cause your vision to worsen.

As you age, your risk of developing cataracts increases.

Can I get cataracts again?

No. During cataract surgery, your entire natural lens is removed and replaced with a new, clear intra-ocular lens (IOL) that cannot become clouded like your natural one.

What if I experience cloudy vision after cataract surgery?

Sometimes patients do experience cloudy vision after cataract surgery. This isn't a new cataract, but a clouding of the posterior capsule, the microscopic bag that holds your new lens in place.

When this happens, your doctor may recommend a YAG laser treatment to quickly and easily restore clear vision. All patients undergoing cataract surgery at MEC are scheduled a 6 month follow up to assess if the YAG laser treatment is necessary. If you do need this treatment it is a painless in office procedure that is covered by OHIP.

What happens if I don't get cataract surgery?

If you don't have cataract surgery the lens will stay cloudy and over time will get worse. The surgery can be more challenging if the lens becomes too cloudy (or dense) so we often advise people to have them removed as soon as you notice a change in your vision.

Will my insurance cover any of the additional fees?

Everyone's insurance plan is different, some do cover the cataract surgery upgrades and others do not. We can provide you with a surgical quote that you can submit to your insurance company for pre-approval.

PRE-OP

Should I take my regular eye drops on the day of surgery?

Continue all other medications that you take.

CATARACT SURGERY

What happens before the surgery?

Once you arrive for your cataract surgery you will check in with the front desk, sign the consent form and they will instil the first set of dilation drops. You will then see the pre-operative nurse who will instil more drops, take you pre-op vitals and finish you pre-op prep.

How long does cataract surgery take?

This varies by patient; however, in general, the procedure lasts 15-20 minutes. This being said, you can always expect to be in our office for 2-4 hours on your date of surgery. This includes, pre-operative preparation time, surgical time, and the post-operative waiting period of 1-2 hours to ensure your eye pressure is stable before you head home.

Will I be awake during cataract surgery?

Most cataract surgeries are performed under topical anesthesia (eye drops). Many patients will also be given a sedative and/or anti-anxiety medicine during the procedure. Light IV sedation can be used if you feel you would be uncomfortable during the procedure, have a difficult time remaining still, or have intense anxiety.

Does cataract surgery hurt?

Generally, no, cataract surgery does not hurt. In addition to receiving medication to relax you before surgery, the anesthetist will numb your eye with anesthetic eye medication before the procedure.

What happens if you blink during cataract surgery?

An eye holder gently keeps the lid open during the procedure to prevent blinking. Although this may sound alarming, there is usually little to no sensation from the lid holder because the eye gets numbed before its use. The eye not receiving surgery can remain open or closed during the surgery and will not affect the eye undergoing surgery.

What are the possible complications with cataract surgery?

Cataract surgery is one of the most common surgical procedures in the world. Modern technology also makes it one of the safest. That being said, complications can occur with any surgical procedure. Potential cataract surgery complications include but are not limited to:

- Infection & Inflammation
- Light Sensitivity
- Dislocated Lens Implant
- Retinal Detachment
- Ptosis
- Ocular Hypertension

INTRA-OCULAR LENSES (IOLs)

What are the different kinds of IOLs implanted during cataracts surgery?

You can choose from a variety of artificial lenses:

A basic standard lens gives you single-focus distance vision. If you want to see near and far distances, you will also need to wear glasses.

A multifocal lens helps you see objects at multiple distances without glasses.

A toric lens corrects astigmatism, the term for an irregularly shaped cornea.

Your eye care professional can help you select the best lens for your lifestyle.

What is a Toric IOL?

Toric intraocular lenses (IOLs) are specialized IOLs designed to correct astigmatism during cataract surgery.

What is an Extended Range of Focus IOL?

Extended Range of Focus IOLs allow you to see at more than one focal point after surgery (Distance and Intermediate)

What is a Full Range of Focus IOL?

Full Range of Focus IOLs allow you to see at more than one focal point after surgery (Distance, Intermediate & Functional Near)

How long do IOLs last?

Once an IOL has been implanted it will be permanent. It does not usually need to be replaced.

Can you change the IOL after it has been implanted?

Typically once an IOL has been inserted it remains in place for the rest of your life. This is why understanding your options and making the selection that best suits your lifestyle is so important.

Will I need to wear glasses after cataract surgery?

Depending on the IOL you select and the health of your eye, you may still need to wear glasses after surgery for near, intermediate, and far.

POST-OP

What are the restrictions after cataract surgery?

You will receive a Cataract Surgery Post-Operative Instruction Sheet on your day of surgery that details the dos and don'ts for after surgery.

The key points on this sheet are; use all of your post operative drops as instructed, no heavy lifting, & avoid getting water in your eyes, for one week after surgery.

Can I work after cataract surgery?

Depending on your line of work, you may be able to return to work within a few days. However, it's important that you avoid certain tasks, such as dusting, gardening, swimming, and vigorous exercise. When in doubt, ask your doctor which activities are safe as you recover after cataract surgery.

What will my vision be like after cataract surgery?

That depends on several factors: the size of the cataract, your overall medical health, the health of the eye, and the type of anesthesia used in the procedure. Most individuals see better within 24 hours, and sight will get progressively better within a week following surgery.

Can I drive after cataract surgery?

Surgery requires an anesthetic, so you must arrange a ride home following the procedure. You may be able to drive as soon as 24 hours after surgery.

When can I resume exercise after cataract surgery?

Your doctor may have you refrain from vigorous exercise for the first week or two after surgery. Restrict lifting or deep bending for several days after surgery, as these activities can increase eye pressure. Generally, you should refrain from lifting over 20 pounds, swimming, sitting in a spa, running, and jogging for the first week

When do I start the drops?

The eye drops should be started as soon as you get home from your surgical appointment. You will be given a chart to follow.

<INSERT DROP FREQUENCY SHEET>

When do I wear the eye shield?

The protective eye shield must be worn at bedtime for 1 week after surgery.

When do I wear the protective sunglasses?

The protective sunglasses should for comfort and protection when outdoors for at least 1 week after surgery.

What are the restrictions after cataract surgery?

On the day of your surgery you will be given a post operative instruction sheet with all of the post operative restrictions.

When should I contact my surgeon?

Many patients are able to recover from surgery without major issues, but there's always a risk that complications develop. You should call/text your eye surgeon as instructed on the cataract post operative instruction sheet given to you at the time of surgery.