

So what should I do?

It is important to understand that just because you have some cataract it does not mean that you have to have a cataract operation. The time to have an operation is when you feel your vision is causing enough problems to accept the small degree of risk that is involved in surgery. The results of cataract surgery are the same if you operate at an early stage or if you wait and have surgery at a later stage.

If you decide that your sight is not presently causing enough problems to warrant an operation, it is likely that the cataract will become cloudier with time, but it may do this very slowly over a number of years. In a few cases it can become cloudier quickly, over a number of months, but the rate of deterioration cannot be predicted.

If you have any questions or feedback please contact the Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) on 0800 389 6819

Website: www.suffolk.nhs.uk

Cataracts

Inside everybody's eye there is a small lens that focuses the picture in the eye.

When we are young, this lens is crystal clear, but as we get older the lens tends to get cloudier, which makes the picture inside the eye cloudy too.

It can also cause problems with glare in bright light or make you increasingly short-sighted.

What can be done about them?

Anyone over the age of about sixty is likely to have a degree of cloudiness of the lens of the eye, but this does not cause any harm to the eye.

If the cloudiness starts to prevent you from doing those things you want to do, or need to do, an operation can be carried out to remove the natural lens from inside the eye and replace it with a clear plastic lens. This operation is called a cataract extraction and lens implant which should improve vision.

For more information about cataracts visit www.nhs.uk – look under cataract surgery

What does a cataract operation involve?

The operation takes about half an hour and is usually performed under local anaesthetic, so you are fully conscious, but the eye is numbed so you do not feel any pain. This means that most patients do not need to stay in hospital overnight, but you should be prepared to stay at the hospital all day on the day of your treatment.

During the operation the cloudy lens is removed from inside the eye and an implant lens is inserted in its place. This is done through an incision in the clear window of the eye, which is usually small enough to seal itself without stitches.

After surgery

It takes about six weeks for the eye to recover fully from the operation. After about four weeks it is usually necessary to change your glasses to get the full benefit of the operation. Sometimes it is necessary to change your glasses again later.

Are there any risks involved?

All operations carry risks of complications and cataract surgery is no different. About 97% of people who have a cataract operation can see better afterwards, but in 2 to 3% of cases problems arise which may worsen vision. Usually the deterioration is minor. In one in a thousand cases a serious complication can occur that can leave you with no sight at all in the operated eye.

Less serious complications can often be treated, but this can involve additional operations.

Overall, cataract surgery is very successful in improving most people's vision.