

# Before and after cataract surgery

## Information for patients

This leaflet answers common questions about how to prepare for cataract surgery and what to expect after. If you would like further information, or have any particular worries, please do not hesitate to ask your nurse or doctor.

In all cases, a doctor will explain the operation to you and answer any questions you may have.

Please remember to check which hospital you are due to have surgery at.

## Before having cataract surgery

### What will I need during my hospital stay?

#### Please bring:

- all medicines you are taking, including inhalers, GTN spray and diabetic medicines, in their original containers
- the name and phone number of your escort home
- a dressing gown and non-slip slippers
- something to help pass the time, such as a book
- glasses, dentures and walking/hearing aids if required.

#### Please do not bring:

- any jewellery, valuables or large amounts of money
- large bags or suitcases.

### Do I need to do anything to prepare for my operation?

It is important to follow these instructions before coming in for your cataract surgery:

- Have a bath or shower on the morning of your operation before coming into the hospital.
- Remove all make-up, nail varnish, body piercings and jewellery – you may still wear your wedding ring. Wear comfortable loose fitting clothing

on the day of your operation to avoid contact with the eye when getting dressed after the operation.

- You may wear a hearing aid or glasses, but not contact lenses – bring equipment to store these.

Please also arrange an escort to collect you from the hospital and stay with you for 24 hours after your operation or at least till the following day. If you do not, we may have to cancel your operation.

You should also make arrangements to take time off work, as advised by your healthcare team.

## If you are having a general anaesthetic or sedation

### Fasting instructions – eating and drinking

Patients who are having a general anaesthetic or sedation should not eat and drink for a period beforehand because of the risk of vomiting under the anaesthetic. However, long periods of fasting are unnecessary and can make you dehydrated, thirsty and hungry.

We ask that you follow these rules for eating and drinking:

- **You should not eat any food, including chewing gum or boiled sweets, for six hours before your operation. Time for last food:**

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- **You may drink liquids\* up until two hours before your operation. Time for last drink of clear fluids:**

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\*The following liquids are okay to have:

- water (still or sparkling)
- tea or coffee without milk or cream.

**Drinks containing milk (eg smoothies or tea/coffee with milk) should not be taken for six hours before your operation**

### Taking your medicines

If you are having your operation under general anaesthetic or sedation, you will be advised which medicines you can continue to take and which you need to leave out. Tablets are not considered to be food and if instructed you should take them before you leave home with a glass of water.

**Please do not take the following medicines on the day of your procedure:**

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Some medications (such as some blood thinners and blood pressure medication) need to be stopped in advance of surgery. **Please follow the instructions below if appropriate:**

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**If you are having a local anaesthetic**

If you are having your operation under local anaesthetic, please eat your breakfast or lunch before coming into hospital.

You can take your medicines, including eye drops, as usual.

**On arrival to the hospital**

Please arrive to the hospital at the time stated on your appointment letter.

We have asked you to come into hospital at a particular time, but please note this is not the time your operation will take place, and you can expect to be in the hospital for either the whole morning or afternoon. We ask you to arrive at a specific time to allow your surgeon or anaesthetist to see you before they enter the operating theatres.

We always endeavour to keep you informed if there is a change to the schedule and we appreciate your patience. Please bring a book or something to keep you entertained while you wait.

When you arrive, please check-in at reception. Tell the receptionist if any of your personal details, eg your address, contact details, GP or next of kin, have changed and they will be happy to update your file.

## Going home after cataract surgery

**You must arrange for an escort to take you home from the hospital** and have a responsible adult stay with you for 24 hours after your operation.

We strongly recommend you to go home by car or taxi. We discourage you from travelling by public transport as you will still be recovering from the effects of the operation and anaesthetic. You will not be able to drive yourself home after the operation.

You will be given eye drops to use at home and instructions on how to use them before you are discharged from hospital. If you find you are running out of eye drops, please contact your GP for a repeat prescription. Please continue with eye drops that you were using prior to surgery unless told to stop.

### Once at home – after care

For the first 24 hours after your surgery you should rest and take particular care when stepping off pavements and going up and down stairs as your depth perception may be affected.

An eye pad and shield (or just a shield) will be placed over your eye after surgery. Please leave the eye pad or shield in place for the night and remove it when you wake up the next morning. The eye shield should be worn at night for one week after the operation to protect the eye during sleep. It can be stuck down with sellotape.

Each morning after you have removed the eye shield, clean away any residue around your eyelids with a clean tissue and then put in your eye drops. Wash your eye shield daily using warm water and soap; rinse and dry it carefully.

You may notice redness on the white of the eye – this is not harmful and usually resolves over two to three weeks.

### Remember the following:

- Do not rub or scratch the eye as this can cause infection. If the eye waters, wipe it gently with a clean tissue.
- When you wash your hair or face, have a shower or shave, keep the soap out of your eyes for the first week.
- Avoid wearing eye makeup until the eye has healed.
- Do not swim or garden for one month after the operation to avoid risk of infection.

- The majority of patients can resume normal physical activity within a day or two. You should be able to return to work the day after your operation, depending on your occupation. If you perform manual work, a job that requires you to drive or one which will put a lot of strain on your eyes, you may need to take longer. The doctor and nurse can advise you.
- Do not play contact sports for at least one month after the operation and when you do begin, start gradually.
- Your eye should not be painful, but you may feel slight discomfort. Make sure you have some over the counter pain relief medication at home.

You can use your old glasses after the operation, but they might not give you perfect vision. **Please do not see an optician for new glasses until your eye has healed (minimum of four weeks).** If you plan to have cataract surgery on your other eye, do not buy new glasses until both eyes have been operated on and have healed.

### Follow-up

A follow up out-patient appointment will be arranged several weeks after your operation. You may be given an appointment sooner than this if required.

### When to seek further advice?

If you experience any of the following symptoms, please contact the urgent eye care nurse or the on call ophthalmologist:

- any severe pain not relieved by over the counter pain medication
- increased swelling of the eye and surrounding area
- increased sticky discharge from the operated eye
- vision that gets worse rather than better over time.

## Do you have any further questions?

For further advice, please contact the ophthalmic nurse practitioner during clinic hours:

- **Barnet Hospital:** 020 8216 4962
  - Monday to Thursday, 9am-5pm, and Friday, 9am-1pm
- **Chase Farm Hospital:** 020 8375 1053/4168
  - Thursday, 8.30am-4pm
- **Edgware Community Hospital:** 020 3758 2000 ext 27202
  - Monday to Thursday, 9am-5pm, and Friday, 9am-1pm
- **Royal Free Hospital:** 020 7794 0500 and ask for the urgent eye care nurse on bleep 1931.
  - Monday to Friday, 9am-5pm
- **St Pancras Eye Centre:** 020 3758 2034
  - Monday, Tuesday and Thursday, 8am-5pm
  - Wednesday and Friday, 8am-1pm
- **Whittington Eye Clinic:** 020 7272 3070 ext 4150
  - Monday to Thursday, 9am-5pm and Friday, 9am-1pm

### At weekends, evenings or in an emergency:

If you need to contact us in an emergency outside of clinic hours, please call the Royal Free London switchboard on 020 7794 0500 and ask for the on-call ophthalmologist.

For more information about the ophthalmology service at the Royal Free London, visit our website at: [www.royalfree.nhs.uk/ophthalmology](http://www.royalfree.nhs.uk/ophthalmology)

### Other useful contacts

#### NHS

You can call **NHS Direct** on 111 at any time for advice or visit the NHS choices website: [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)

#### Royal National Institute for the Blind

Website: [www.rnib.org.uk](http://www.rnib.org.uk)

Phone: 0303 1239999

Email: [helpline@rnib.org.uk](mailto:helpline@rnib.org.uk)

If you have any feedback on this leaflet or for a list of references for it, please email: [rf.communications@nhs.net](mailto:rf.communications@nhs.net)

**This leaflet is also available in large print. If you need this leaflet in another format – for example Braille, a language other than English or audio – please speak to a member of staff.**

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