



# How to Prepare for Cataract Surgery

**Alcon**<sup>®</sup>

## A guide to help patients know what to expect before, during and after cataract surgery

Age-related cataract is the leading cause of blindness representing 51% of all blindness globally.<sup>1</sup> While that is a staggering number, cataract surgery is safe and effective, and in approximately 90% of cases, people who have cataract surgery have better vision afterwards.<sup>2</sup> Vision loss due to cataracts can be restored by surgically removing the affected lens and replacing it with an artificial intraocular lens.<sup>2</sup>

The following information will help you determine if you are a good candidate for cataract surgery and what to expect before, during and after the procedure.

### Are you a Candidate for Cataract Surgery?

Always talk to your eye care professional (ECP) or physician to understand if you are a candidate for any procedure including cataract surgery. Depending on the severity of a patient's vision loss, cataract surgery may be delayed after diagnosis, but eventually, surgery may be inevitable as corrective spectacles or contact lenses will not adequately improve vision and will not fix cataracts.<sup>2</sup> Typically, when a cataract progresses to the point that it inhibits daily tasks like reading or driving, surgery would be beneficial.<sup>2</sup>

- **Schedule a consultation** with your ECP to determine if you are a candidate for cataract surgery<sup>2</sup>
- **Review medical history** and any medications you may take that could affect surgery<sup>2</sup>
- **Ask your ECP's advice** to determine which type of cataract surgery and intraocular lens is best for you<sup>2</sup>

### What to ask your ECP

Below are some suggested questions to review with your ECP when considering cataract surgery. You may have additional questions as your conversation progresses:

- How advanced are my cataracts?<sup>3</sup>
- What are my treatment options?<sup>3</sup>
- What are the different types of intraocular lenses (IOLs)?<sup>4</sup>
- Which IOL is best for me and why?
- How much does cataract surgery cost?<sup>3</sup>
- What is the surgical procedure like?<sup>4</sup>
- Who will perform the actual surgical procedure? You or another surgeon?<sup>3</sup>
- How long does the procedure take?
- What risks should I be aware of?<sup>3</sup>
- Will I need medicines prescribed before or after the procedure?<sup>3</sup>

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- Will any of my current prescriptions or over-the-counter drugs complicate the surgery or recovery process?<sup>3</sup>
- How much time should I plan to take off from work?<sup>3</sup>
- Are there special care instructions for my family or caregiver?<sup>3</sup>
- When can I resume everyday activities?<sup>3</sup>

## Preparing for Cataract Surgery

Once you and your ECP have determined that you are a good candidate for cataract surgery, you will receive instructions on how to prepare for the procedure.<sup>5</sup> Your ECP's instructions may include the following:

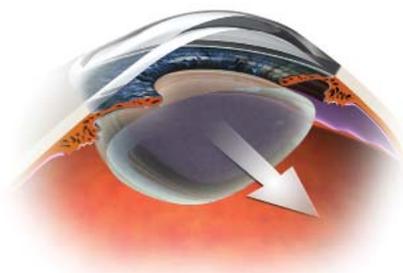
- Take at least two days off work for the procedure and one day to recover before resuming a regular work schedule.<sup>5</sup>
- Make arrangements for a ride to and from the hospital or surgery center.<sup>5</sup> The entire process from check-in to check-out should last approximately three hours.<sup>5</sup> You may also need driving assistance the following day to pick up post-operative medications and to make a follow-up exam.<sup>5</sup>
- Eat only a light breakfast or skip eating before the procedure, depending on your ECP's advice.<sup>5</sup> As a general rule, patients are asked to refrain from alcoholic beverages for at least 24 hours prior to surgery.<sup>5</sup>
- Shower and wash hair on the day of the surgery to help maintain a clean surgical environment.<sup>5</sup> Patients should also wear clean, comfortable clothes, and avoid wearing eye make-up.<sup>5</sup>

## During Cataract Surgery

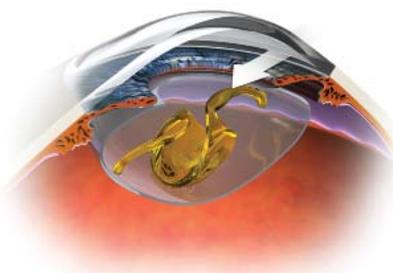
Although all surgery has risks, cataract surgery is a highly effective and generally very safe procedure.<sup>2</sup> Most people experience no pain or discomfort during the procedure.<sup>2</sup> And thanks to recent advancements, general anesthesia isn't even necessary – only a topical and/or local anesthetic.<sup>2</sup>

Each ECP's procedure may differ slightly, but in general you can expect the following during cataract surgery:

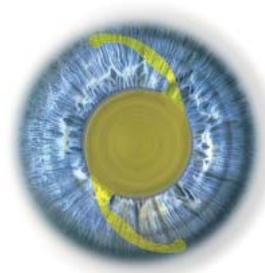
- The operating room is a sterile environment and is treated to prevent infection – just like any other major surgical procedure.<sup>5</sup>
- After the topical anesthetic is applied to your eye, you may hear sounds of the instruments and the surgical team talking but you probably won't be able to see them.<sup>5</sup>
- A nurse will start intravenous fluids and attach you to a heart rate monitor.<sup>5</sup> A drape will be placed around the face so that only the eye to be operated on is visible.<sup>5</sup>
- The surgeon will make a small incision in the cornea and use a small probe to break up and remove the cataract, and then insert the new lens.<sup>5</sup> In most cases, the incision is so small that stitches are not required to close it.<sup>5</sup> As the surgeon inserts the new artificial intraocular lens (IOL) toward the end of the procedure, the microscope light may become very bright.<sup>5</sup> If you feel pain at any time, alert your surgeon.<sup>5</sup>
- Once the cataract surgery is complete, the surgeon will cover the eye with a bandage or shield.<sup>5</sup> In many



*Cataract removal*



*Insertion of new lens*



*Vision restored*

cases, the bandage may be removed within a few hours.<sup>5</sup> After a short recovery period, the patient can have someone drive them home.<sup>5</sup>

## After Cataract Surgery

Every person's experience with cataract surgery is unique, but below are a few things most people experience following cataract surgery.<sup>5</sup> Always ask your ECP for more details and follow their post-operative instructions.<sup>5</sup>

Immediately after cataract surgery

- You may feel groggy from the local anesthesia - this is normal and will wear off fairly quickly.<sup>5</sup>
- Your ECP may place antibiotic drops in the eye to prevent infection and administer anti-inflammatory drops to minimize swelling.<sup>5</sup>
- You may receive prescription medications and instructions on how to care for the eye.<sup>5</sup> A follow-up appointment will be scheduled before you return home.<sup>5</sup> Your ECP may provide sunglasses for the drive.<sup>5</sup>
- Once home, you should relax and let your caregiver fill and deliver prescriptions.<sup>5</sup> You will not be allowed to drive until approved by the ECP.<sup>5</sup>
- Avoid touching and rubbing the eye or removing the protective covering.<sup>5</sup> The eye may feel sensitive or scratchy for a few days.<sup>5</sup> You may notice a glare or halos, a circular flare or hazy ring of light that may appear around a headlight or other lighted object.<sup>5</sup> This will go away over time.<sup>5</sup>
- Resume normal daily activities - except for driving - within the first 24 hours, unless told otherwise.<sup>5</sup> Avoid lifting anything in excess of 15 pounds as it can increase pressure in the eye.<sup>5</sup>
- Wear the protective eye shield while sleeping, and try to avoid sleeping on the side of the body that was operated on.<sup>5</sup>

- The next day, return to your ECP for a check-up.<sup>5</sup>
- Don't wear eye make-up until your ECP approves.<sup>5</sup>
- If you are in good health, you should be able to resume intense exercise after one week.<sup>5</sup>

## Life after cataract surgery

- Within the first month, the eye should fully recover.<sup>5</sup> Your brain will continue learning how to work with the new IOL.<sup>5</sup> If you have dry eyes, your ECP may administer some mild dry-eye therapy drops.<sup>5</sup>
- Return for a follow-up visit at a time specified by your surgeon.<sup>5</sup> If you need cataract surgery on the other eye, this is likely to occur when your surgeon is satisfied with the progress of your first eye.<sup>5</sup> If you received a monofocal IOL (corrects vision at one distance) and are not having surgery in the other eye, you may be fitted for new spectacles or contact lenses during this visit.<sup>5</sup>
- Challenge your vision by engaging in a full range of activities.<sup>5</sup> The more the eyes and brain work together, the more you will enjoy the results.<sup>5</sup>
- You will continue to adjust for the next two to four months.<sup>5</sup> The ECP may still want to monitor progress, especially if you have another eye condition.<sup>5</sup>
- Changes in vision after cataract surgery may be due to a secondary cataract.<sup>5</sup>
- At six months, your vision should be optimal.<sup>5</sup> At one year, and every year thereafter, you should have a complete eye exam by an ECP.<sup>5</sup>

*As with any surgical procedure, cataract surgery carries risks. Please consult with an eye care professional for more information and to find out if cataract surgery is right for you.*

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  2. National Eye Institute, Facts About Cataract, [http://www.nei.nih.gov/health/cataract/cataract\\_facts.asp](http://www.nei.nih.gov/health/cataract/cataract_facts.asp) (Updated Not Available) [Accessed November 30, 2012]
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