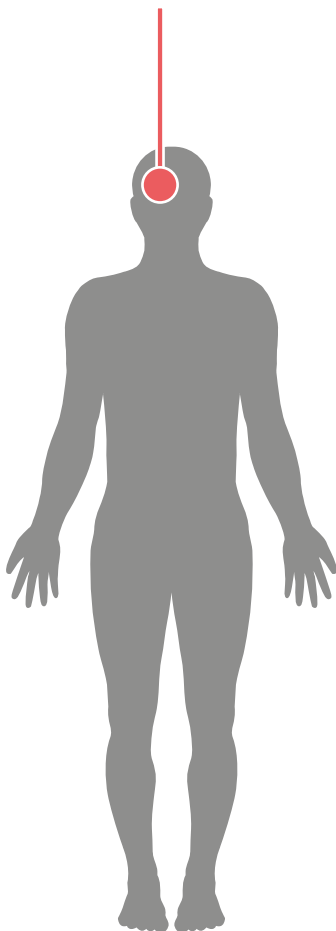


# Get Well Soon

## Helping you to make a speedy recovery after cataract surgery

### Cataract Surgery



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This leaflet is a guide to recovering from a cataract operation. It does not provide specific medical advice or diagnosis. Nor does it give advice about whether you should consent to an operation. All of these matters depend on individual medical advice from your consultant surgeon based on your own health, medical condition and personal circumstances.

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## Who this leaflet is for

Print instructions:

To print this document click once on the print icon in your Acrobat Browser, or go to File, then Print on the drop down menu.

To print only one page, select the page number you want in your print menu, usually under 'options' or 'preferences' depending on the printer type.

To save ink, select the 'draft' option.

This leaflet is for anyone who is recovering from, or is about to undergo, surgery to remove a cataract.

The technical term for your operation is a phacoemulsification, which is how your surgeon and other health professionals who are helping you may refer to it.

This leaflet should be read in conjunction with any other information that you have already been given about your procedure.

The following information is designed to help you make decisions about your recovery. Your surgeon, GP and other healthcare professionals will offer you a lot of very good advice - but ultimately, it's you that has to make the decisions.

The advice in this leaflet offers broad guidelines for people who do not have any complications with their surgery or other specific medical circumstances, such as a relevant long-term condition.

Obviously, every individual has different needs and recovers in different ways - so not all of the advice in this leaflet will be suitable for everybody. Most patients with cataracts have often retired, but cataracts can occur in younger people. When you are weighing up how to make the decision that's right for you, talk with your surgeon, your GP, or with your Occupational Health Service at work, if you have one. They will help you to make the right choices for a safe and speedy recovery.

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## What to expect after the operation

### Appearance

There will be no visible scarring but the white of the eye can have any degree of redness. There can also be bruising around the eye.

### Stitches

Stitches do not usually cause itching or irritation and will normally be removed between 6 weeks and 3 months after the operation.

### Dressings

You may go home with an eye pad and shield, or just a shield. The pad can be removed after the first hour, but some patients prefer to keep it in place until the following morning. The shield should be worn at night for the first week.

### Discomfort

The eye may feel gritty; you may experience some mild headache. These symptoms are common. The discomfort should rapidly improve over the next 24 hours. There should be no worsening of your symptoms. If your discomfort or headache get worse, contact your hospital immediately.

### Vision

Your vision will normally be much better by day 2. Sometimes there can be some blurring or misting in the eye, but this should improve over the course of the day. At no point should your vision get worse after the surgery. If you feel your vision is becoming more blurred, contact your hospital immediately. Your old glasses will no longer be suitable, and you may be more comfortable without them.

### Tiredness / Feeling emotional

Your body is using energy to heal itself, so you may feel more tired than normal - this is perfectly normal. Most patients however are very happy with the improvement in their vision.

### Sport

If you take part in a sport that risks a poke in the eye, you should discuss returning to these activities with your surgeon before the operation. You should not go swimming for the first 2 to 4 weeks to minimise the risk of infection. When cycling in the first few weeks following surgery, keep your sunglasses on to reduce the impact of dust.

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## Things that will help you recover more quickly

If you live alone, and you do not have family or friends living close by, organise support in advance.

### Use your post-operative eye drops regularly

You will have been given some eye drops to put into your eye several times a day for the next four weeks. These eye drops are to help protect the eye against infection and to stop inflammation. It is very important to use the drops exactly as prescribed. If you have difficulty putting the drops in yourself you will need to ask for help.

### Eat healthily

Eating a healthy, balanced diet containing a variety of foods, including plenty of fresh fruit and vegetables, will help to ensure that your body has all of the nutrients it needs to heal.

### Stop smoking

By not smoking, even if it's just for the time that you're recovering, you immediately start to improve your circulation and your breathing. In addition, not smoking improves the healing process itself. This is a good time to give up!

### Family and friends

Family and friends can give you practical help with the tasks you might be temporarily unable to do in the first day or so - such as driving, or the weekly shop. They may also be able to help you put your drops in regularly.

### Keep a routine

Get up at your normal time in the morning, get dressed and move about the house.

### Build up gradually

Your cataract operation will not normally prevent you from doing any of your normal activities. Today's modern operation, with a very small incision into your eye, means that it is perfectly safe to bend and lift. Your vision will often be much better immediately, even without glasses.

The lens placed into your eye will most commonly have a fixed focus. Most patients choose to have this set for distance. You may therefore find that while distance vision is clear, you will still need reading glasses. Your eye will not be ready for new custom-made glasses until 4 weeks after surgery, but you can use the cheap, ready readers available in most chemists as soon as you like.

Walking is the best way to support returning to fitness. Normal activities and exercise should not cause you any pain. If you are concerned, consult your GP.

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## Returning to work

You do not need your GP's permission to go back to work – this is ultimately your decision.

The majority of patients with cataracts have often retired from work. However, cataracts can also occur in much younger patients.

### **Fact: Work can be part of your recovery**

Everyone needs time off to recover after an operation - but too much of it can stand in the way of you getting back to normal. Getting back to your normal routine sooner rather than later can actually help you to recover more quickly.

### **Getting back to work**

How quickly you return to work depends on a number of things:

- How you heal
- How you respond to surgery
- The type of job you do

People whose work involves a lot of exposure to airborne particles or dust for example, may not be able to return to work quite as quickly as those who have office jobs.

### **How soon can I go back?**

Every person recovers differently and has different needs. Cataract surgery normally has a very quick recovery and the majority of individuals who are doing administrative roles will normally be back at work almost immediately (see recovery tracker). Jobs that are more physically demanding and involve exposure to liquids or dust might require a more graduated return to full activities. Contact sports or roles involving control and restraint should be avoided for a little longer, say 2-4 weeks, but are best discussed with your surgeon.

If your work involves driving, you can return to work as soon as your vision meets the occupational requirements set by the DVLA (see section on driving). This may be the next day, or it may sometimes be delayed until you are measured for your new glasses at 4 weeks. If your employer has an occupational health nurse or doctor, they will advise you on this. Alternatively, your GP can give you advice. Ultimately, it's your decision when you want to go back, but listen to the advice offered to you.

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## Planning for your return

### 3 golden rules for a speedy recovery:

Stay active.

Keep a normal daily routine.

Keep social contact with people.

Talk with your occupational health service or GP to work out when and how are best for you to return to work.

Depending on the nature of your job, you might want to ask your employer about returning to work on safer duties at first.

This means:

- avoiding exposure to liquids or dust during the first four weeks.
- ensuring you meet the occupational visual requirements for driving and equivalent duties such as operating forklift trucks, cranes and other heavy machinery.

If you have an HR Department at work, they will be able to advise you regarding sick pay or any other benefit you may be entitled to during your time off. Alternatively, talk directly with your employer.

### Confidence

It will take you a little while to regain your full confidence when you go back to work. You may be slower than normal at first, so don't take on too much responsibility too soon. Don't be too hard on yourself about this - it's perfectly normal and you'll start to get back up to speed after a few days.

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## Driving

Ultimately, it is your responsibility to ensure that you are in control of the vehicle at all times and to feel confident that you would be able to demonstrate this, if asked.

You are fit to drive as soon as your vision meets the DVLA driving standard. This can be the very next day, but can be delayed until your eyes are measured for your new glasses at 4 weeks.


Before resuming driving, you will need to be fully recovered from your surgical procedure. You should also be free from the distracting effect of pain, or the sedative or other effects of any pain relief medication you are taking to be able to concentrate fully on driving. You should be comfortable in the driving position and able to safely control your car, including freely performing an emergency stop.

If your eyes feel dry after surgery, for the first couple of weeks avoid driving with an open driver's window, or with the air vents on full and directed at your face; hot dry wind can cause irritation to the eye.

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## Recovery tracker

Days/Weeks Post Op	How you might feel	Things you can do safely	Traffic light	Fit to work?
1–2 days	Your eye may feel itchy and gritty. You may have a mild headache. Lights and colours may seem unusually bright. Your vision will normally be much sharper. Your eye may be red and you may even have a black eye. All this is perfectly normal and nothing to worry about. Use your drops regularly and wear your shield at night.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Get up, get dressed, move around the house.</li><li>• Walk and do gentle exercise as normal.</li><li>• It is fine to read and watch television.</li></ul>		<b>Yes</b>

### When can I have sex?

For many people, being able to have sex again is an important milestone in their recovery. There are no set rules or times about when it's safe to do so other than whether it feels okay to you – treat it like any other physical activity and build up gradually.

### specific print instructions:


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## Recovery tracker

Days/Weeks Post Op	How you might feel	Things you can do safely	Traffic light	Fit to work?
3–7 days	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Your eye may still be gritty and feel slightly dry.</li><li>If you had a red eye it will be improving.</li><li>If you had a black eye the bruising will be reducing.</li><li>Your vision should be better than before the operation, although your near vision may not be as clear as your distance vision.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>All normal activities.</li><li>Gentle exercise other than swimming.</li><li>You may still occasionally need to take mild pain relief.</li><li>If you meet the DVLA standard, you are legally entitled to drive.</li><li>Most people who work are back by now.</li></ul>		<b>Yes</b>

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## Recovery tracker

Days/Weeks Post Op	How you might feel	Things you can do safely	Traffic light	Fit to work?
7-10 days	Back to normal, although your vision may still be slightly blurred until you are measured for new glasses.	You should be back to your normal daily activities and exercise, other than swimming.		<b>Yes</b>
10-14 days		You should now be able to do most of your normal routine, although swimming is still not recommended.		<b>Yes</b>

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## Recovery tracker

Days/Weeks Post Op	How you might feel	Things you can do safely	Traffic light	Fit to work?
3–4 weeks		<p>At 4 weeks you will normally have completed the last of your eye drops. Your eye will look normal again and you will be ready to see your optician to be measured for new glasses. Your vision should be better than before your operation, particularly with your new glasses.</p> <p>You can start to swim again, and return to contact sports, but ideally with eye protection. You should be able to drive again, so long as you have no other reason for not reaching the DVLA driving standard.</p>		<b>Yes</b>
6 weeks		<p>You should be able to return to all normal sports now, but follow the advice from your surgeon before resuming sports like rugby and martial arts.</p>		

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## After you get home

Day	Got up at ... am	Vision:	Eye drops:	Activities:	Went to bed at ... pm	Any pain, any headache?
1						
2						

Keeping a track of what you've achieved each day will help you to stay positive and get back to enjoying your normal life more quickly.

Remember, take a step-by-step approach to getting better and build up your activities. If you're concerned about anything or if you feel you're not making progress fast enough, call your GP.

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## After you get home

Day	Got up at ... am	Vision:	Eye drops:	Activities:	What do you want to achieve tomorrow?
3					
4					
5					
6					
7					
8					

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## After you get home

Day	Got up at ... am	Vision:	Eye drops:	Activities:	What do you want to achieve tomorrow?
9					
10					
11					
12					
13					
14					

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## Keeping well

Because of your operation, the chances are you'll be a lot more aware of your eye and how it works. Right now is a really good time to build on the knowledge you've gained and make small changes to your lifestyle that can prevent you from experiencing certain health problems in the future. You can do this by:

- Improving your diet - a healthy, balanced diet contains a variety of foods, including plenty of fresh fruit and vegetables, plenty of starchy foods (such as rice, pasta, potatoes) and some protein-rich foods (such as meat, fish, eggs, lentils, beans). Your diet should also be low in fat (especially saturated), salt and sugar.
- Any exercise – even if it's just a few short walks each day - really will make a difference to your health.
- Quit smoking - NHS Stop Smoking Services are one of the most effective ways to stop for good - and they're free. Your doctor will be happy to help you.

### Holidays

There are no issues around flying or taking holidays (other than no swimming for the first four weeks), but just in case, you might think twice about remote destinations. Don't forget to bring enough drops!

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## Website links

The internet's a great thing – anything you want to know is there for you at the click of a mouse, but do be careful about the way you use it when it comes to getting information about your health. It's hard to know which sites to trust and none of them can tell you anything that's specific to your individual medical needs.

If you do want to know more about your operation, recovery or return to work, here is a list of trusted websites that offer safe, sensible, useful information:

**The Royal College of Surgeons of England**  
<http://www.rcseng.ac.uk/>

**The Royal College of Ophthalmologists**  
<http://www.rcophth.ac.uk/>

**NHS Stop Smoking Service**  
<http://smokefree.nhs.uk/>

### **NHS Choices**

<http://www.nhs.uk/Pages/Homepage.aspx>

### **Department for Work and Pensions**

<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-work-pensions>

### **GOV.UK**

<https://www.gov.uk/>

### **DVLA - Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency**

<https://www.gov.uk/browse/driving/disability-health-condition>

Call 111 for nonemergency medical advice