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Bwrdd Iechyd Prifysgol
Aneurin Bevan
University Health Board

Patient Information

Undergoing Cataract Surgery

Eye Unit

Your doctor has diagnosed and explained that an operation could improve your vision. This information is given to you so that you can make an informed decision about that operation. Take as much time as you wish before signing the consent form.

Please discuss the matter with anyone you wish and if you have any questions for the doctor ask before the operation.

What is a cataract?

A cataract is a clouding of the lens in the eye. Your vision becomes blurred and dim or you may experience glare.

What can be done to help to improve my sight?

While spectacles can help, when the cataract reaches a certain stage the only option to improve vision is surgery.

When should I have the operation?

You do not have to wait until you are blind. The operation can be carried out when you feel the visual impairment is interfering with your daily activities, e.g. reading, shopping and hobbies.

What happens in the operation?

The operation is usually performed as a day-case procedure under local anaesthetic. The eye to be operated on will be marked. Just before the operation some drops will be put into your eye to enlarge the pupil. You will be taken to the operating room where the operation is performed with the aid of a microscope.

A small cut is made in the eye and the cataract is removed. Under normal circumstances a plastic lens is inserted into the eye. The whole operation takes about 30 minutes.

Training health professionals is essential to the continuation of the Health Service and improving the quality of care. Your operation may provide an important opportunity for such training under the careful supervision of a senior doctor. You may refuse any involvement in a formal medical student-training programme without this adversely affecting your care and treatment.

What improvement can I expect?

Cataract surgery is very safe and effective. You can expect approximately:-

- 95% chance of better vision
- 90% chance of good vision (6/12)
- 86% chance of excellent vision (6/6)

With the use of near and/or distance glasses.

Are there any potential problems?

Yes, problems can occur as with any operations. It must be stressed that cataract surgery is very successful in the vast majority of patients. Problems that may occur during the operation are:-

- Bleeding inside the eye
- Tearing of the capsule
- Loss of the gel from within the eye

If these happen, it may not be possible to put in an implant.

Problems that may occur after the operation:-

- Inflammation
- Glaucoma
- Infection
- Swelling of the retina and detachment
- In rare instances the lens strength may be too strong or too weak
- Different sizes of the image between the two eyes
- Drooping of the upper lid
- Clouding of the cornea
- Allergy or side-effects to the medication used
- Clouding of the capsule of the lens

All these complications are rare but some can permanently damage your eye. The chances of some of these are as follows:-

- 1% chance of detached retina
- 5% chance of swollen retina
- 1 in 1000 chance of infection
- 20% chance of capsular clouding requiring laser treatment

Are there any potential problems due to the anaesthetic?

The anaesthetic required for cataract surgery is very safe but like surgery, complications do on occasions occur. There are 3 ways that the eye can be anaesthetised. These are by, general anaesthetic, local anaesthetic and topical anaesthetic.

A general anaesthetic is when you are asleep. Although this is a safe procedure complications do occur, including bruising and inflammation at the site of injections, memory loss, stroke, heart or chest problems and very rarely death. This list is by no means complete and any concerns should be discussed with your anaesthetist.

A local anaesthetic is when you are awake for the operation but the eye is numbed with drops and an injection. You must lie reasonably still during the operation. Complications include bruising and very rarely perforation of the eye with the injection needle.

A topical anaesthetic is when the eye is numbed by drops alone. You must lie still and the surgeon will ask you to look in certain directions during the operation. The most common complication is slight discomfort. It is impossible to mention every possible complication that may occur. It must however be stressed that cataract removal is a very safe and successful operation. If you require further information ask the doctor **before** your operation.

PERSONAL NOTES _____

**“This document is available in Welsh /
Mae’r ddogfen hon ar gael yn Gymraeg”.**