

Deciding what to do about cataracts

This short decision aid is to help you decide what to do about your cataract. You can use it on your own, or with your doctor, to help you make a decision about what's right for you at this time.

There are two main options for treating a cataract. The choices are:

- Using aids and adaptations to help you manage with your level of vision
- An operation to remove the cataract.

What are my options?

	Cataract surgery	Visual aids and adaptations
What is the treatment?	<p>Cataract surgery is an operation to remove the cataract. The operation involves removing the cloudy lens and replacing it with an artificial lens.[1] The eye surgeon (ophthalmic surgeon) will usually be your ophthalmologist (a medical doctor who specialises in eye problems).</p>	<p>Visual aids are things you can use to help you see better or make the most of your vision, without actually treating the cataract. Visual aids include prescription glasses, magnifying lenses to help you see up close, adjusted lighting, sunglasses to prevent glare, and wide-brimmed hats to block sunlight. Adaptations means making changes to make the most of the vision you have. You can try using large print books or adjusting computer screens to make text appear larger.</p> <p>Your ophthalmologist, optician or GP can refer you to your local low vision service. The low vision service can give you advice about adapting to changes in your vision and information about visual aids that make everyday tasks easier. They can also tell you about support that is available for people with poor vision.</p>
What is the effect on your eyesight?	<p>Most people who have cataract surgery can see much better afterwards.[3] The artificial lens should last for years.</p>	<p>Glasses and other visual aids may help you to see better in the short term. Your cataract may continue to get worse, which would mean your eyesight gets worse over time.[2]</p>
What is the effect on your quality of life?	<p>People who have had cataract surgery say they are better able to look after themselves, get around, and have a social life with family and friends. They also say they feel better about their lives. [5]</p>	<p>If visual aids help you to see, then they are likely to have a positive effect on your quality of life. But we don't know much about how well they help.[4]</p>

	Cataract surgery	Visual aids and adaptations
What other consequences does this treatment have?	<p>People who have cataract surgery are likely to have fewer problems in doing everyday tasks after their operation.[8] People who have cataract surgery have fewer falls and are less likely to break a bone.[9]</p> <p>Around 92 in 100 people have vision good enough to drive, three months after a cataract operation. For people with other eye problems as well as cataracts, around 77 in 100 people have vision good enough to drive after three months.[10]</p>	<p>If you have a cataract it may mean you can't see well enough to do everyday tasks such as reading, working, and driving. Visual aids may help with some of these things in the short term.[6]</p> <p>About 63 in 100 people with cataracts have vision good enough to drive. Tinted glasses or sunglasses, or a visor, may help if you find driving hard because of glare. If your vision is too poor to drive, they won't help.[7]</p>

	Cataract surgery	Visual aids and adaptations
What side effects or complications does this treatment have?	<p>About 10 in 100 people have complications during cataract surgery. These may not make your vision worse in the long term.[11] Problems that can make your sight much worse happen in 1 in 1,000 operations.[12]</p>	<p>Some people find it difficult to adapt to using visual aids.</p>

What are the pros and cons of each option?

People with cataracts have different experiences about the health problem and views on treatment. Choosing the treatment option that is best for the patient means considering how the consequences of each treatment option will affect their life.

Here are some questions people may want to consider about treatment for cataracts:

- Are they willing to wait and see what happens to their vision?
- How much do their vision problems upset them?
- Do their vision problems prevent them from doing everyday things?
- Are they willing to have an operation on their eye?
- How important is it for them to be able to go out on their own?
- How important is it for them to be able to drive?
- Are they willing to have a treatment that risks their sight getting worse?

How do I get support to help me make a decision that is right for me?

Go to <http://sdm.rightcare.nhs.uk/pda/cataracts/> for more detailed information about treatments for **Cataracts**. People using this type of information say they understand the health problem and treatment choices more clearly, and why one treatment is better for them than another. They also say they can talk more confidently about their reasons for liking or not liking an option with health professionals, friends and family.

References

References can be viewed online at <http://sdm.rightcare.nhs.uk/pda/cataracts/references/>