ACUITY OPHTHALMOLOGY

Unit 101, 49 Richard Way SW, Calgary, AB T3E 7M8
Phone: (403) 264-0141 Fax: (403) 265-9279

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT CATARACT SURGERY

What are cataracts?

A cataract is when your eye's natural lens becomes cloudy, causing vision to become blurred. Symptoms include blurry vision, seeing double or a ghosted image out of the eye with cataract, being extra sensitive to light (especially with oncoming headlights at night), poor night vision, and seeing bright colors as faded or yellow instead.

Is cataract surgery the only treatment for cataracts?

While research is continually being done, surgery is the only treatment that can restore vision that has been impaired by cataracts. Tremendous advances have been made in modern cataract surgery making it one of the most successful surgeries performed today.

Will I feel pain during cataract surgery?

During cataract surgery, your surgeon will use a local anesthetic (numbing eye drops). While you may experience pressure during certain parts of the surgery, you should not experience any pain. You will also be given a mild sedative to help you relax.

What if I decide not to have the recommended cataract surgery?

When left untreated, cataracts typically worsen, and vision continues to be reduced. Eventually, untreated cataracts can cause legal or even total blindness. In most cases, implantation of the intraocular lens will restore vision lost from the cloudy lens.

Can a cataract come back after surgery?

It is not possible for a cataract to “grow back” because the lens where the cataract forms has been removed and replaced with a new synthetic lens. The intraocular lens (IOL) implant never needs maintenance or replacement. In some patients, a cloudy film can form behind the implant on the lens capsule membrane, usually a few months after the original cataract surgery. This condition is called posterior capsular opacification, or secondary cataract (because it seems as if the cataract has returned). This is easily removed with a short laser procedure performed at the Rockyview Eye Clinic.

Why do I need to wait to have cataract surgery?

Cataracts do not always interfere significantly with vision. They start small and are almost imperceptible to the patient. If a cataract progresses to the point that vision is impaired or lifestyle is affected, it should be removed. If it remains mild and stable, surgery may not be necessary. Be sure to have regular comprehensive vision check-ups with your ophthalmologist to monitor cataract progression so that, together, the decision to have cataract surgery can be made.

ACUITY
OPHTHALMOLOGY

Unit 101, 49 Richard Way SW, Calgary, AB T3E 7M8
Phone: (403) 264-0141 Fax: (403) 265-9279

About the surgery: Did I receive a lens implant?

Unless your surgeon informed you otherwise, yes, you have received a new synthetic lens. Details of the lens you received can be obtained from your ophthalmologist upon request.

What is my implant made of?

Almost all lenses we use are made of foldable acrylic lenses. These lenses have been used worldwide since 1993 and have exceptional durability and biocompatibility.

Can my eye reject the implant?

There have been no documented cases of rejection of intraocular acrylic lenses.

How long will my implant last?

Your implant is intended to last for the rest of your life. Lenses that have been used since the early 1980's have not required replacement.

What holds my lens implant in place?

The lens implant is positioned inside a membranous pouch behind your iris called the capsule. The lens has fine "arms" that extend from its sides and push out against the walls of the capsule to keep it stable. As recovery progresses, the capsule contracts around the lens holding it even more securely. You cannot feel the lens inside the eye.

Was a laser used to remove my natural lens?

No. Your natural lens was broken up using an ultrasound probe and evacuated with suction from the eye.

About recovery: Why does it feel like something is in my eye after surgery?

The opening your surgeon made at the time of surgery is slightly swollen and irritated for a day or two after surgery. It is normal for it to feel as though you have hair in your eye at that point. It will subside within a few days.

Is it normal for my eye drops to sting when I put them in?

Yes, especially for the first day or two. The opening your surgeon made in your eye remains very sensitive when you put drops in for a few days and, even later, the chemical qualities of some medications may continue to cause stinging. You cannot eliminate the stinging, but you may minimize it by making sure your eyes stay well lubricated by using a fresh bottle of preservative free artificial tear drops. You may use preservative free artificial tears as frequently as you wish. Use them after medicated drops as the artificial tears may form a barrier to absorption of medicated drops.

ACUITY
OPHTHALMOLOGY

Unit 101, 49 Richard Way SW, Calgary, AB T3E 7M8
Phone: (403) 264-0141 Fax: (403) 265-9279

I noticed a red spot of blood on the white of my eye after surgery. Should I be worried?

Fine blood vessels on the surface of the white part of the eye can sometimes leak or bleed at the time of surgery. Although it may be cosmetically disturbing to you, it is not dangerous and will not affect your vision. It usually reabsorbs within three weeks.

My eyelashes feel "gummy" and look crusty after my drops. What can I do?

Medicated drops or artificial tears can create a build-up along your lash line. This build-up should be cleansed before continuing with the next set of drops. Using sterile eyelid scrubs that can be purchased at a neighborhood pharmacy, gently wipe your lash line. You can do this very gently the first evening following surgery if you notice a build-up.

Should I wear my old glasses after surgery?

No. The prescription lenses in your old glasses will be incorrect after cataract surgery because new lenses have been placed which will lessen your prescription. While wearing your old glasses won't cause damage to your eyes, they can cause discomfort and headaches. See your optometrist or optician as soon as possible after surgery to have the prescription eyeglass lens from the operative side removed or replaced with a clear lens. Once vision has stabilized, which is usually 4 – 6 weeks after surgery, your optometrist can provide a new prescription eyeglass lens if any is required.

Is it normal for vision to be fuzzy right after surgery?

Yes. You may have mild swelling on the surface or within the eye that can cause slight blurring for about a week to 10 days following surgery. It should gradually improve over that time.

Is it normal to see glare and haloes around lights?

Mild swelling on the surface or within the eye can create problems with glare and haloes for a week to 10 days after surgery. After that time, you should notice improvement. Also, at night or in dim lighting, when your pupil enlarges to let more light in, you may notice haloes. This is because the pupil may be opened wider than the lens implant diameter and you may detect blurring at the edge of the lens. This is normal and will be resolved as soon as your pupil contracts slightly smaller. If you had a multifocal lens implanted, you may continue to see fine rings around lights for many months. The design of the lens creates these rings but over time, your body "learns" to overlook the rings. They typically do not disrupt regular activities.

How soon can I fly after surgery?

There are no restrictions for flying after surgery. However, we recommend that you remain in the Calgary area for the first week in the rare case that a delayed complication in your surgery should arise. We recommend no international travel to third world destinations for at least two weeks after cataract surgery

ACUITY
OPHTHALMOLOGY
Unit 101, 49 Richard Way SW, Calgary, AB T3E 7M8
Phone: (403) 264-0141 Fax: (403) 265-9279

I see well at a distance but why can't I see clearly to read?

Unlike your natural lens, artificial lenses do not have the ability to change shape and achieve clarity of vision at both distance and near. Most artificial lenses are designed to optimize distance vision (the exception is trifocal lenses). Non-prescription reading glasses may be used to sharpen near vision. If you wish to obtain prescription reading glasses instead, we suggest you wait until 4 – 6 weeks following surgery at which time your vision will be fully stable.

When can I drive after surgery?

We recommend that you refrain from driving for at least one week after surgery to allow the swelling in your eye to settle and adaptation to your new lens. Patients should be aware, however, that having cataract surgery does not necessarily entitle you to drive if you have visual issues aside from cataract (such as macular degeneration, glaucoma, or optic neuropathy) that impair vision. If you are unsure, talk to your ophthalmologist.

How long will I be off work after surgery?

Most patients should be off work for at least one week after eye surgery. Your ability to work after that time depends on the nature of your job and your ability to tolerate work after surgery. Sedentary work may be well tolerated as soon as a week after surgery. Demanding physical labor should be avoided for at least two weeks after surgery. Talk to your doctor to determine what an appropriate back to work schedule would be for your specific occupation.