

# Cataract

## Patient Information Sheet

### What is a cataract?

It is when the lens of the eye becomes cloudy and difficult to see through.

You may find:

- things look cloudy or blurred
- bright lights dazzle
- you see double in the affected eye.

### What is the lens?

The lens is inside the eye directly behind the coloured part, which is called the iris. Little muscles are attached to the lens. These can slightly alter the shape of the lens to help you focus on what you want to see.

### What causes cataracts?

The most common cause is ageing, but occasionally they happen because of injury, or as a complication of other conditions.

### Some symptoms:

- slight blurring of vision
- spectacles always seem to need cleaning
- seeing slightly double
- change of colour vision - things look more yellow
- difficulty with glare and bright lights

### **What can be done to help?**

In the early stages of cataract, spectacles alone may help you see clearly enough. You will need more frequent eye examinations to assess the progress of the cataracts.

### **Will I need an operation?**

When your vision has become so poor that it seriously affects everyday life - such as driving, watching TV, or reading - then your optometrist will refer you to an eye specialist, called an ophthalmologist, in the hospital. The ophthalmologist will assess your eyes and help you decide whether to have an operation.

### **What does the operation involve?**

It is often carried out under local anaesthetic, and usually as a day-case procedure (no overnight stay).

The cloudy fibres of the lens inside your eye are removed using ultrasound. Then your lens is replaced with a new, clear implant lens made of special plastic.

Afterwards, your vision is usually much better, unless there are other reasons for your poor sight besides the cataract.

### **Where can I have this operation?**

If the cataract has advanced in such a way that it is causing difficulties in everyday vision, your optometrist or GP can refer you for surgery.

This surgery can be carried out at an NHS hospital, a mobile surgery unit or a private hospital under a NHS contract. Your optometrist and GP will be able to discuss the various services offered locally, to help you choose the best option for you.

