

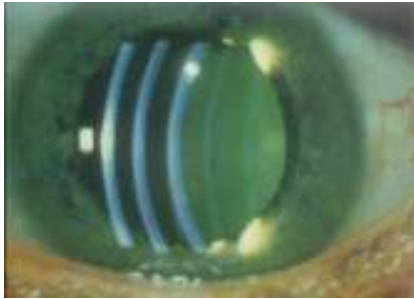


# CATARACT

# VISITECH

Total Eye Care [www.visitech.org](http://www.visitech.org)

Cataract is a clouding or opacity of the normally transparent lens inside the eye, thus preventing the light rays from passing into the eye. It is a part of normal ageing process, and hence is seen commonly in patients above 50 years of age. Cataract is managed by surgery which involves removal of the opaque lens, and replacing it with an artificial intra ocular lens (IOL). With the advancements in the instrumentation and techniques, cataract surgery has become very reliable, safe and successful procedure with minimal discomfort to the patient, and early visual recovery.



### What are the symptoms of cataract?

Cataract usually forms and progresses slowly and therefore leads to a gradual blurring of vision. It may also cause other symptoms like frequent change of glasses, glare, change in

colour vision etc.

### What is the treatment? Can it be cured by medicines?

There are no medications, eye drops, exercises or glasses that will cause cataracts to disappear once they have formed. Surgery is the only way to remove a cataract.

### When should one get operated for Cataract?

The timing of cataract surgery largely depends upon the needs of the patient. When the vision loss due to cataract is significant enough to hamper one's routine activities, the cataract may be operated upon. It is not necessary to wait for cataract to 'ripen' or 'mature'. In fact, a more advanced stage of cataract is sometimes more difficult to manage by newer techniques like Phacoemulsification.

### What are the surgical options, and which one is the best?

The various options are extracapsular (non-phaco) surgery with lens implant, phacoemulsification with a foldable or non-foldable lens implant. The best procedure for most patients is stitchless phacoemulsification with a foldable intraocular lens. However, for some selected patients, an alternative method may be more suitable.

### What is Phacoemulsification?

It is a painless procedure done under local anesthesia with or without an injection, using a very small incision. Through this small incision, the tip of the instrument is introduced into the eye. This tip uses localized high frequency waves to break the cataract into very minute fragments and pieces, which are then sucked out in a controlled manner through the same tip. A thin 'capsule' or shell is left behind after cleaning up of the entire opaque cataract. A foldable intra ocular lens is then inserted through the same small incision and is supported on this capsule.

### Are the stitches required after Phacoemulsification?

The incision (wound) required for phacoemulsification is small (<3mm) and the wound construction is such that it is self-sealing. Therefore a surgery, in which a foldable lens has been implanted through the small 3 mm wound, generally does not require any stitch. The surgeries in which the wound has been

enlarged (5 or 5.5 mm) to put a non-foldable lens is likely to require one stitch, because the wound is larger.

### What are the advantages of Phacoemulsification over extracapsular (non-phaco) surgery?

In a non-phaco surgery the incision required is larger (10-12 mm) and requires stitches for closing. This larger incision takes 6-8 weeks to heal. Moreover, the stitches can cause distortion of the normal curvature of the cornea (the clear part of eye) and thus lead to astigmatism and blurred vision because of this. In contrast, Phacoemulsification requires smaller wound of only 3 mm, which heals faster with minimum distortion and leads to early visual recovery and return to work.

### What anesthesia is used for the surgery?

In most of the patients, the surgery is generally done under local anesthesia. Most of the times it is performed after putting only anesthetic drops, and without any injection. However, in some cases, especially in anxious patients, local anesthesia in form of injection may be given.

### Is admission required for cataract surgery?

It is a short surgery of about 15-20 minutes and the patient can go home after ½-1 hour. So only a short stay is required.

### What are the postoperative precautions?

You will have to use eye drops for about 4 weeks. It is advisable not to splash water on your open eye or rubbing it for at least 2 weeks. The dusty conditions are avoided for the same duration. Use of cosmetics in and around eyes should also be avoided for 4 weeks. There is no restriction in reading, watching TV, walking or eating any type of food. Most of the patients can resume their office work within a week after the surgery.

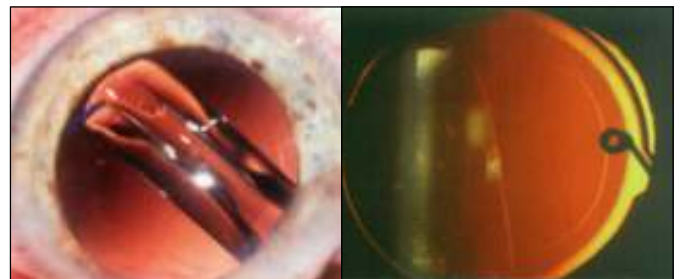
### Will I need glasses after surgery?

Yes, you will require glasses, which are generally prescribed 4 weeks after the surgery. The power required is generally very small and is different for distance and near vision.

### What are the complications of cataract surgery?

Cataract surgery is one of the most successful surgeries. Over 90% of patients operated for cataract gain a useful vision. But like any other surgery, problems may develop occasionally in the form of infection, inflammation of the eye, displacement of the natural or artificial lens, swelling in the retina (cystoid macular edema), retinal detachment, etc. Most of these complications can be managed well if they are detected early. Hence a good post-operative follow up must be maintained and in case of any unusual pain, decreased vision or other symptoms, the doctor must be consulted immediately.

In some patients, in the months following surgery, the membrane behind the new lens can get thickened leading to blurred vision. This is referred to as capsular opacity or 'aftercataract', and can be treated easily by laser as an out-patient procedure.



**Disclaimer:** Information published here is for educational purposes only and is not intended to replace medical advice. If you suspect that you have a health problem, please consult your doctor immediately.

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