

# Vision imbalance following cataract surgery (anisometropia)

## Information for patients from Ophthalmology

This leaflet is not meant to replace the information discussed between you and your doctor, but can act as a starting point for such a discussion or as a useful reminder of the key points.

### What is anisometropia?

Most people cope very well following cataract surgery. However, some people will experience symptoms of anisometropia.

Anisometropia is another way of describing an imbalance between the two eyes. This can sometimes happen following surgery, as your brain tries to adjust to the changes in your vision.

Cataract surgery involves replacing the natural lens of your eye with an artificial one. Sometimes there is an opportunity to change your glasses prescription (and therefore the power of your glasses) at the time of your surgery by choosing a strength of artificial lens to suit your eye.

If you are normally short sighted or long sighted, the power of the lens we use can dramatically reduce the strength of prescription glasses you will need after your operation. However, as we usually only operate on one eye at a time, this may leave your eyes out of balance with one another until we can operate on your second eye.



## How do I choose a lens?

Your options will usually be discussed with you either by the doctor in the clinic or by the person carrying out the measurements of your eye (biometry) before your surgery. The choice of lens depends on the vision in your other eye and whether it also has a cataract. We will also discuss with you your daily needs such as work, hobbies, or driving.

The final choice of lens can usually be changed at any point up to the time of your operation, including the day of surgery itself.

In some cases a special lens will need to be ordered for you. If this applies to you, the doctor will make you aware and discuss any options with you.

If you are uncertain about your options or wish to have further discussions, this should be done before you sign the consent form before your surgery.

## What are the symptoms of imbalance?

Sometimes we can predict whether a patient is likely to have a problem following surgery but it is not possible in every case.

Patients with an imbalance will often have one or more of the following symptoms.

- Double vision.
- Different sized images in each eye.
- Problems with balance (increasing the risk of falls).
- Difficulty with 3D vision and judging distances (for example pouring liquids, judging steps, and the general judging of distances).

## How can I cope with the symptoms of imbalance?

The problems that you experience may vary from person to person.

In some cases, this will be resolved after a few days, in other cases the symptoms may last until we can operate on your second eye to balance your vision.

If we are planning surgery to your second eye, there may be a few months between your operations. If you usually wear contact lenses, the symptoms of imbalance can often be avoided by continuing to wear the contact lens in the eye that has not had surgery.

You may also try the following to help cope with the imbalance.

- Driving is not recommended until your vision has stabilised and may depend on the vision in your other eye.
- Spend a few quiet days following your surgery to allow your brain to adjust to the change in your vision.
- Be aware that images may look different from before your operation. Allow a little more time and care in performing your daily activities whilst you adjust.
- Sometimes your optician can remove the lens from your glasses on the side that has been operated on. If this works for you, it can be substituted with plain glass for cosmetic purposes (check that this works before arranging for plain glass to be put in).
- Some patients find that over the counter 'Ready Readers' (available from supermarkets, pharmacies, libraries, and pound shops) are helpful in the short term, but these will not match the vision in both eyes.
- In some cases, it may be more comfortable to use only one eye. This may mean covering the eye that has not had surgery until the situation has been resolved.

## When will I have surgery to my second eye?

We will usually carry out surgery to your second eye once your first eye has healed. We ask that all patients visit their optician four to six weeks following surgery. We have explained that the surgery changes your glasses prescription; the optician will provide us with a new prescription, so that we can make sure that both your eyes are balanced when we carry out surgery to your second eye.

It is not usually worth updating your glasses frames until after your second operation, although if you are happy with the frames it may be worth discussing the option of changing one lens with your optician.

## Further information

If you need any further information or have any concerns about your condition, please contact your consultant's secretary, their phone number will be listed on your appointment letter.

### This leaflet has been produced with and for patients

If you would like this information in **another language, audio, Braille, Easy Read, or large print** please ask a member of staff. You can ask someone to contact us on your behalf.

**Any complaints, comments, concerns, or compliments** please speak to your doctor or nurse, or contact the Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) on 01227 78 31 45, or email [ekh-tr.pals@nhs.net](mailto:ekh-tr.pals@nhs.net)

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