Patient & Family Guide
2023

Cataract Surgery

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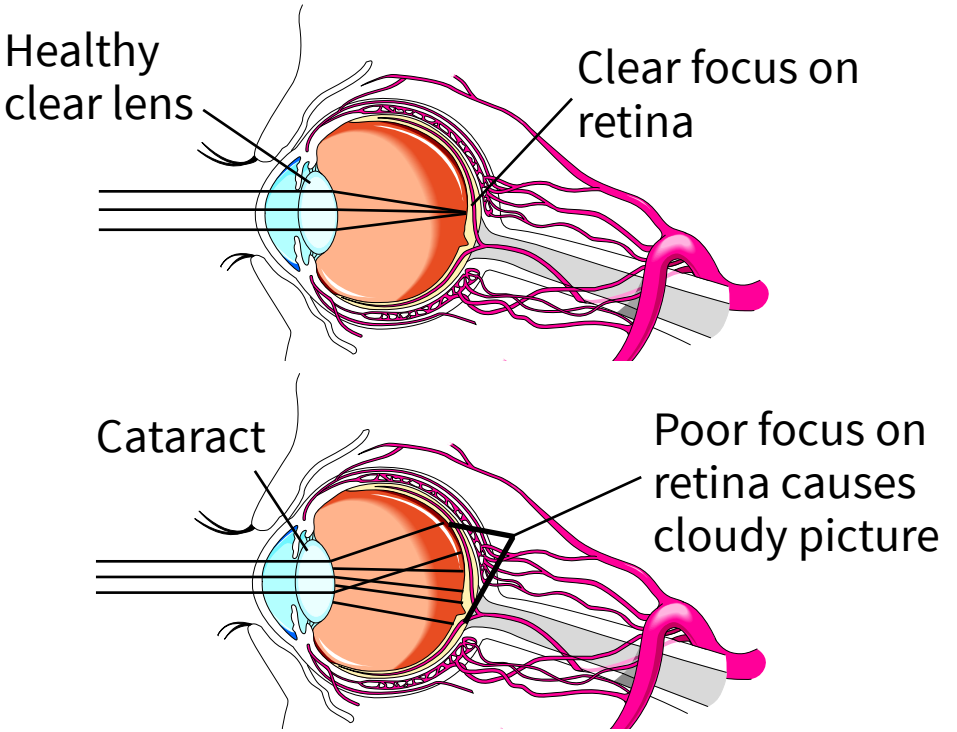
nova scotia health

www.nshealth.ca

Cataract Surgery

What is a cataract?

A cataract is a clouding of the lens of your eye. The centre of the lens gets hard and cloudy. This makes it hard for your eye to focus light.



- Cataracts can be caused by aging, an eye injury, disease, and some medications.

- Common symptoms of cataracts are:
  - Blurred vision
  - The glare of a halo around lights
- Cataracts **do not** cause pain, irritation, itchiness, or watery eyes.

Cataract surgery

- Cataracts can be removed easily with surgery.
- This is usually done using a **local anesthetic**. This means you are awake during surgery. The eye surgeon will give you medication to freeze your eyes. You may also be given medication to help you relax.
- The surgeon will make a small incision (cut) in the front of your eye. They will remove the cataract. They will then place a clear, plastic lens in your eye behind your pupil.

What are the possible risks?

- Cataract surgery is safe and effective. As with any surgery, cataract surgery has risks.

- There are risks whenever anaesthesia is used, but these will be low since you will not be put to sleep for the surgery.
- Some rare risks of cataract surgery can cause blinding. Other risks may bother you, but they can be treated.
- There is a rare (1 in 1000) chance you may go blind caused by a complication like:
  - Infection
  - Bleeding
  - Retinal detachment (when the retina pulls away from the inside wall of the eye)
- There is a chance (1 in 100) that a support bag around the cataract will break during surgery and the cataract will fall inside your eye. If this happens, you may need another surgery to fix this.
- Others risks include:
  - Inflammation (swelling)
  - Swelling of the retina (also called macular edema)
  - Swelling of the cornea

  - More pressure in the eye and glaucoma
  - A secondary cataract (posterior capsule opacification)
  - Dry eyes
- During surgery, a clear membrane (posterior capsule) is left in place to support the implanted lens. In many people, the membrane gets hazy. If this happens, in time you will need a laser treatment to have clear vision again.
- Sometimes, cataract surgery does not improve your vision. This may be because of damage from other conditions (like glaucoma, macular degeneration, diabetes, or corneal disease).

Day of surgery

- Read the pamphlet *Getting Ready for Eye Surgery*:
  - www.nshealth.ca/patient-education-resources/0134
- The nurse will place drops in your eye to dilate (make bigger) your pupil.

- You may have an intravenous (I.V.) injected into a vein in your arm using a needle. You may be given medication through the IV during surgery, if needed.
- You will be taken to the Operating Room (O.R.).
- After surgery, you will go back to the Day Surgery Unit.
- You will then be able to go home in about 10 to 15 minutes.

Discharge instructions

- You will have a shield over your eye. Your surgeon will tell you when you can remove it.
- Your follow-up appointment with your eye surgeon is on _____ at _____.

At home

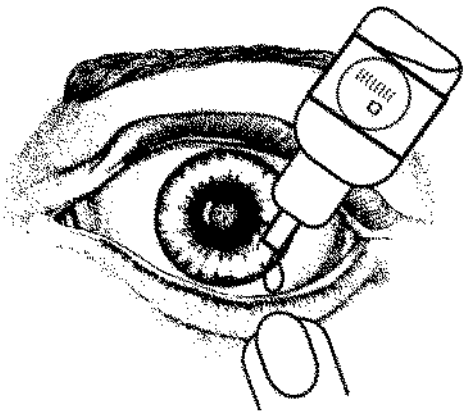
- Your eye may be red and bruised right after surgery.
- Keep taking any medications that were prescribed for you by your other doctors. Keep taking your glaucoma drops (if you use them).
- If you have discomfort in your eye, take acetaminophen (Tylenol®). Follow the directions on the package.
- **Wear your eye shield every night for 7 days (1 week) after surgery, or as told by your eye surgeon.** This will help prevent an eye injury while you sleep.
- **Wear glasses, sunglasses, or an eye shield at all times when you are outside of your home.** You **do not** need to wear them at home while you are awake.
- **Do not** wear a cotton eye pad.
- Use a clean facecloth and tap water to clean gently around your eyes. **Do not** press down or rub.
- You may shower, bathe, and wash your hair. **Do not** let soapy water get into your eye.

- Your vision may be blurry until you get new glasses. This is common.
- You may do most of your usual activities, like:
  - › Bending over
  - › Writing
  - › Reading
  - › Watching TV
- **Do not lift anything over 20 pounds.**
- If you have a feeling of eye strain or pressure in your eye, stop whatever activity you are doing.
- After 1 week, you should be allowed to go back to all your usual activities. Talk with your eye surgeon about this.
- **Ask your eye surgeon when you can go back to work and drive a car.**
- Bring all of your eye medications and any written instructions with you when you see your eye surgeon.
- Keep all follow-up visits with your eye surgeon.

Using eye drops

Follow the eye medication schedule given to you by your nurse or doctor.

- Wash your hands well.
- Shake the bottle well.
- You may sit and tilt your head back or lie down.
- Open both eyes and look up. With 1 finger, draw your lower lid down.
- With the bottle in your other hand, hold it as close as possible to your eyelid without touching it. Place 1 drop into the pocket made when your lower lid is pulled down.
- **Do not** touch your eyelid or your eye with the tip of the bottle.



- Close your eye gently. Keep it closed for 1 full minute (60 seconds).
- Use a tissue to gently remove extra drops from your cheek.
- Wash your hands well.
- **Do not stop using your drops without checking with your eye surgeon.**

Call your eye surgeon right away if you have:

› Severe (very bad) pain or swelling

› Unusual discharge (like blood or pus)

› Sudden change or loss of vision

› Sudden flashes of light in your eye

› A shadow, like a dark curtain has been drawn across your eye

If you cannot reach your eye surgeon, call Locating at the VG at **902-473-2222** and ask to have the ophthalmology resident on call paged, or **go to the nearest Emergency Department right away.**

QEII Health Sciences Centre

is made up of 10 buildings located on two sites

Halifax Infirmary Site

1a. Halifax Infirmary
1b. Emergency Dept.

2. Abbie J. Lane Memorial Building

3. Camp Hill Veterans' Memorial Building

VG Site

4. Nova Scotia Rehabilitation Centre

5. Bethune Building

6. Mackenzie Building Laboratories

7. Centre for Clinical Research

8. Dickson Building

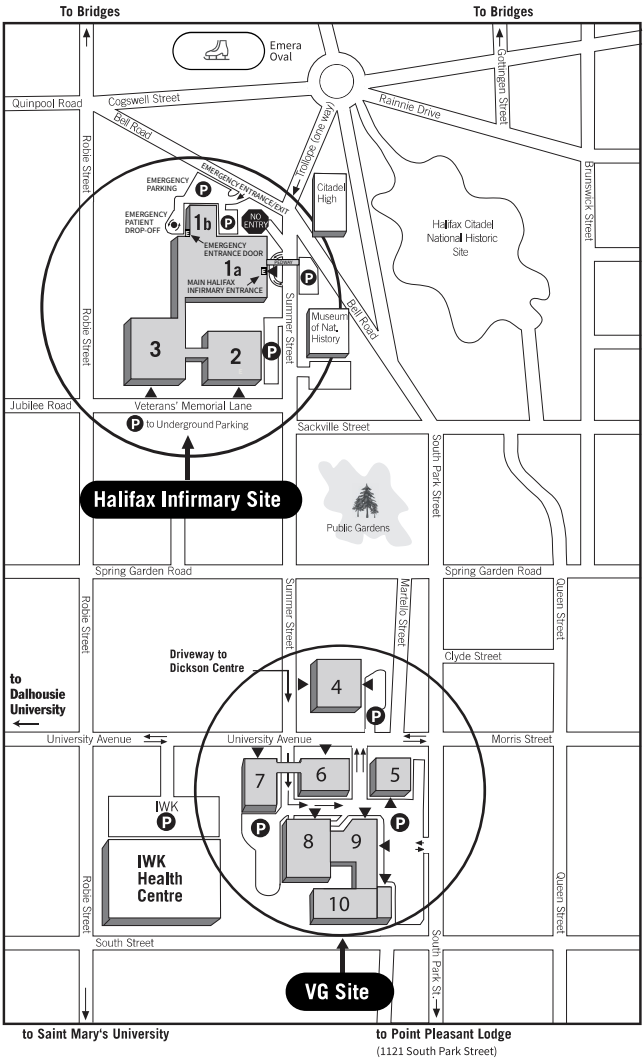
9. Victoria Building

10. Centennial Building

Ⓟ Patient Parking

▶ Entrance Doors

Please do not wear scented products when you come to the QEII.



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Notes:

This pamphlet is for educational purposes only. It is not intended to replace the advice or professional judgment of a health care provider. The information may not apply to all situations. If you have any questions, please ask your health care provider.

Find all patient education resources here:
www.nshealth.ca/patient-education-resources

Connect with a registered nurse in Nova Scotia any time:
Call 811 or visit: https://811.novascotia.ca

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