



WEST MICHIGAN

Eye & Laser

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Cataract Surgery FAQ's

Frequently Asked Questions Regarding:

Cataract/Lens Replacement Surgery

What is a cataract? What causes a cataract? What are symptoms of a cataract?

For most people, cataracts are the result of natural aging. A cataract is caused by the clouding of the eye's natural lens. The lens normally helps focus light onto the retina. When the lens becomes cloudy, the light becomes blocked and scattered causing the image that we see to become blurred.

Though natural aging is the most common cause of cataracts, other recognized causes of cataracts include:

- Diabetes
- Smoking
- Eye injuries
- Certain Medications
- Long-term exposure to ultraviolet light
- Exposure to radiation
- Genetic factors

If you are developing cataracts, you may notice some of the following symptoms:

- Clouded, blurred or dim vision
- Frequent changes in eyeglass or contact lens prescription
- Increasing difficulty with vision at night such as with night driving
- Sensitivity to light and glare or haloes around lights
- The need for brighter light for reading and other activities
- Dullness or fading of colors
- Double vision that is noticeable when looking out of just one eye

These symptoms can occur with other eye problems and can result in vision loss.

Does cataract and lens replacement surgery hurt?

Thanks to numbing drops and medications to help you relax, this procedure involves minimal discomfort. It is normal to experience some scratchiness, foreign body sensation, or a mild headache during the first 24 hours after surgery, but severe pain is rare and should be reported to your doctor right away.

Will I be asleep for the surgery?

Since this procedure does not take very long, it is unnecessary to put you to sleep with general anesthesia. Fortunately, this makes your surgery even safer. Instead, we will use topical/local anesthesia to numb the eye and you will remain awake during surgery.

Who performs the procedure?

Dr. David Goran will perform the procedure. There will be at least one technician and nurse in the room to assist him.

I have cataracts in both eyes. Will Dr. Goran do surgery on both at the same time?

No, only one eye will be operated on at a time. Typically, we will perform surgery on the fellow eye as soon as 1 to 2 weeks after the first eye. All patients are different and heal at different rates, so speak with us further to learn what is appropriate for you.

How long will I be in surgery?

The surgery itself is very quick and usually lasts less than 15 minutes. However, due to pre-operative preparation and brief post-op recovery, your entire stay in the surgical center will be about 1 1/2 to 2 hours.

Can I drive myself to and from the surgical center on the day of surgery?

No. Even if you elect not to have relaxing medication administered before surgery, your vision will be blurry in the operative eye (due to dilation and anesthesia) and not suitable for driving. You must arrange for transportation to and from the surgical center.

Will I have stitches or have to wear a patch?

At West Michigan Eye & Laser we use the most modern technique for cataract lens replacement surgery that involves creating a tiny incision with either a laser or a blade that self-seals and does not require stitches. Because we use topical anesthesia that numbs the surface of the eye only, it is not necessary to wear a patch on the operative eye to keep it closed. You will have the ability to blink and close your eyelids. We will provide you with an eye shield to wear while sleeping during the first few nights after your surgery. This is used to protect your eye so that you don't rub it or put pressure on it while sleeping.

How long before I can see after surgery?

Every patient and eye is different, but many patients see well enough to drive the day after surgery.

What are the risks of cataract surgery?

Just like any surgical procedure, cataract surgery does have risks, which could include vision loss. Fortunately, Dr. Goran takes every precaution to minimize those risks.

When can I resume normal activities? When can I play golf, tennis, etc?

Most patients can return to normal basic activities like reading and watching TV by the next day, and return to work within one to seven days. However, results vary for different patients, so you should ask your doctor if you have questions about specific activities. We usually recommend that you avoid touching or rubbing the eye, engaging in activities like sports where an object could hit the eye, and getting dust, dirt or sand into the eye. We also advise you to avoid swimming for two weeks after surgery. You may exercise if you avoid high impact activity during the first week. Most patients resume golf, tennis, and other active sports or hobbies within one week.

When can I go to the hair salon?

You may go as soon as the next day but be sure to advise your stylist of your recent eye surgery and to take precautions to prevent any chemicals, water or hairspray from getting into your eyes.

After surgery, will I be able to drive at night?

You should find that your ability to drive at night is improved once your cataract is removed. Once implanted, you might notice rings, haloes, or starbursts around point sources of light such as headlights or streetlights. This effect may be more noticeable with the Multifocal “Restor” Lens. Fortunately, these visual effects are typical mild, rarely bothersome, and tend to diminish with time.

Will I need glasses after cataract and lens replacement surgery?

This depends much on what type of intraocular lens you choose to have implanted as well as unique aspects to your eyes such as the presence and amount of astigmatism. Many people mistakenly believe that simply having cataract surgery will enable them to see perfectly without glasses. While having cataract surgery can improve the vision, the conventional lens implant is a single, fixed focus lens. It cannot give distance vision one moment and near vision the next (like the eye’s natural lens does in a young person).

What is the best type of intraocular lens implant?

There is no one best intraocular lens implant. Selection of a lens implant is a very personal choice based on your visual needs, eye conditions, and postoperative expectations. This decision should be made in close discussion between you and your eye surgeon. What might be a good choice for a friend, family member, or neighbor, may not be the best choice for you.

If I need glasses after cataract and lens replacement surgery, how soon can I get a prescription?

The eye typically takes 3-4 weeks to stabilize after cataract surgery. It is recommended that you wait until then to have a prescription made so as to allow for the most stable result.

If I elect to have surgery with a monofocal lens implant, will I be able to use the same pair of glasses for the rest of my life?

The natural lens is a major factor that causes us to need eyeglass prescription changes during our adult life. When you go through cataract surgery, the implantation of a

synthetic lens creates added stability in your eyeglass prescription. While your prescription will be more stable, the average lifespan of a pair of eyeglasses is approximately two years due to scratching, breakdown of lens coatings, and other wear and tear. For this reason, if you have opted for a lens implant still requiring you to wear eyeglasses, then you will still find a need to change your eyeglasses approximately every two years.

I have good medical insurance. Will my medical insurance cover a multifocal Restor or Toric Lens?

Not surprisingly, the additional charge for implanting these special lenses is not covered and must be paid out-of-pocket by the patient. Because these lenses have nothing to do with improving the health of your eye, insurance companies and Medicare do not view them as “medically necessary.”

Will the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act or “Obamacare” change whether cataract surgery will be covered?

Experts that we work with who help to interpret new regulations suggest that cataract surgery may remain as it is today with some portion covered by insurance and/or Medicare and some out-of-pocket cost that will be a patient’s responsibility. Just as with some discounted health insurance plans today, certain insurance companies may set higher restrictions as to who would qualify for cataract surgery. We advise you to check with your insurance representative as to the specific qualifications of your plan. Once you are a patient of our practice, our doctors and insurance experts can assist in this process to help determine whether you qualify for cataract surgery and determine what your costs might be.

Can my cataract come back or can I develop a cataract after I have had a lens implant?

No, once a cataract has been removed, a new cataract cannot develop. Lens implants do not cloud over like human lenses do. However, over time many patients may notice that their vision has once again become cloudy. This fairly common condition, which may occur with any type of lens implant, is known as posterior capsular opacification or “PCO.” Some doctors refer to it as a “secondary cataract” because the visual symptoms are similar to those of a cataract. If the PCO becomes bothersome, your surgeon can clear it away with a relatively simple laser procedure, known as a Yag Laser Capsulotomy.

What might I notice immediately after surgery and in the first couple days or weeks while my eye is healing?

Your eye may be very sensitive to light and wind and may have some watering and tearing for a couple weeks following surgery. It is also normal to experience a slight aching or tenderness to the eye as well as irritation, scratchiness, and dryness. You will likely notice fluctuations in your vision that might include the appearance of a shimmering or flickering to your vision and will gradually improve over the first couple weeks following surgery. These changes generally should not be severe enough to interfere with your day-to-day activities.

Are there any common side effects that may last more than a couple weeks?

One of the most common side effects of cataract surgery is the temporary development or worsening of dry eye syndrome. These symptoms most often improve or subside within the first 3 months after surgery however in some cases they may last up to one year or beyond. Fortunately, we have a number of treatments to improve or alleviate your dry eye symptoms.

Are there any side effects to multifocal “Restor” lenses? Anything that I won’t like?

Most patients will notice some amount of a ring or halo effect around point sources of light at night, especially in the first few days after surgery while the pupil is dilated. These are different from and less problematic than halos caused by cataracts. Fortunately, this effect is usually mild, generally does not interfere with your visual function, and tends to decrease with time. The process through which these halos become less noticeable by the brain selectively ignoring them is known as neuroadaptation. It is the same process that allows us to ignore background noise such as traffic noise or the sound of an air conditioner or to become less aware of certain stimulation such as the feeling of wearing jewelry or a seatbelt. How quickly this adjustment happens will vary for different individuals. Experience has shown this to continue to improve throughout the course of the first year. Earlier generations of multifocal lenses had a more pronounced effect that was more difficult to adapt. Fortunately, subsequent design changes have enabled subsequent generations of multifocal lenses to be re-engineered so as to significantly reduce the halo effect compared to the earlier model. During the first couple weeks after surgery, some patients describe differences in the crispness of their near or intermediate vision when compared with their distance vision. With time, healing, and adaptation to the lens implant optics, the crispness of each of these zones of vision tends to become more equal.

Will cataract surgery get rid of my floaters?

No. Though it is possible for patients to notice some changes to their floaters when they have gone through cataract surgery, you should not expect for cataract surgery to get rid of your floaters.

What are negative dysphotopsias?

Negative dysphotopsias are the appearance of a dark line or crescent-shaped shadow out of the corner of your peripheral vision that may be described as a dark shadow. Others describe this as what a horse might see with blinders over the sides of its vision. This visual effect may occur in patients who have had otherwise perfect surgery with any type of intraocular lens implant. Though it is not well understood why this phenomenon occurs, it is believed to be related to changes in the optical system of the eye with the introduction of the lens implant. This temporarily creates an arc-shaped shadow over the peripheral retina when light enters and reflects within the lens implant. Fortunately, this effect generally goes away over 6 to 12 months after cataract surgery in most patients.

Can the lens be replaced if it doesn’t work? Does it ever need to be replaced?

Although this would be considerably unlikely for it not to work, the lens implant or IOL can be replaced with a different one, if needed. Overall, lens implants are intended to be permanent and never need to be replaced under normal circumstances. The first lens

implants were used starting shortly after World War II, so there is considerable data supporting the long-term safety of lens implants.

Are there any precautions after surgery?

See the answer above regarding resuming normal activities.

Who do I call if I have a problem?

Contact our office immediately if you have any problem, especially if you experience decreased vision or pain.

West Michigan Eye & Laser: 231-737-9378