Cataract: what happens after your eye check

16 October, 2026 | 8:12 AM

In short

A cataract is a clouding of the lens inside your eye. It usually develops slowly over years. Early on, updated glasses, tinted lenses or vision aids may help. When it starts to get in the way of everyday life, your optometrist can refer you to an ophthalmologist to talk about surgery.

What a cataract is

The lens sits behind the coloured part of your eye and focuses light onto the retina. With a cataract it slowly turns cloudy. Most cataracts come with getting older. Sunlight, smoking, diabetes, an eye injury and long-term steroid use can add to the risk.

Common signs are:

- Blurred or cloudy vision
- Glare, or sensitivity to bright light
- Trouble driving at night
- Haloes around lights
- Colours looking faded or yellowed
- Double vision

If your cataract is early

Not every cataract needs to be removed. While it is mild, you may find these help:

- An updated glasses prescription

- Tinted lenses or sunglasses for glare
- Vision aids, such as a magnifier

Your optometrist will tell you when to come back, so any change can be measured. Tell us sooner if your vision starts to get in the way of driving, reading or work.

If you are referred for surgery

Cataract surgery is done by an ophthalmologist (a medical doctor trained in eye disease and eye surgery). Here is what usually happens next.

1. **Your optometrist refers you**
   to an ophthalmologist.

2. **You see the ophthalmologist.**
   They examine your eyes and talk with you about whether surgery is right for you.

3. **Tests before surgery.**
   Your eye is measured so the new lens is the right strength. You may also need a blood test or a heart check.

4. **Surgery day.**
   It is usually day surgery under local anaesthetic. The cloudy lens is removed and replaced with a clear artificial lens. The operation usually takes less than 30 minutes.

5. **The second eye.**
   If both eyes need surgery, one is usually done first and the other a few days or weeks later.

6. **Afterwards.**
   Follow your surgeon's instructions for drops and activity, and keep your follow-up visits. Ask your surgeon when to have your glasses checked again.

How often to have your eyes checked

If you are over 50 and have no vision problems, Healthdirect advises an eye test with an optometrist every 2 years. With a cataract, your optometrist may suggest coming back sooner. Eye tests at Lynbrook Optical are bulk billed for Medicare-eligible patients. See **eye tests**.

Looking after your eyes

- Wear sunglasses and a hat outdoors.
- If you smoke, get support to stop.
- Drink less alcohol.
- If you have diabetes, keep your blood sugar in your target range.
- Eat a healthy diet.

When to call us on (03) 9702 9118

- Your vision is making driving, especially at night, harder
- Glare is making everyday tasks difficult
- Your glasses no longer seem to help
- You have questions about your referral

Call (03) 9702 9118

⚠ **Go to the Royal Victorian Eye and Ear Hospital emergency department (32 Gisborne Street, East Melbourne, open 24 hours), or call 000, if you have**

a sudden loss of vision or severe eye pain. Cataracts usually change slowly and do not usually cause pain, so a sudden change needs to be checked straight away. If you have had surgery recently, also call your surgeon's rooms.

To book an eye test, book online or call us on (03) 9702 9118.

FAQs

— Does every cataract need surgery?

No. Many cataracts are mild for a long time. Surgery is usually considered when the cataract starts to affect everyday life, such as driving or reading.

— Who does cataract surgery?

An ophthalmologist. Your optometrist can refer you if your cataract is starting to affect everyday life.

— Are both eyes done at once?

Usually not. One eye is normally done first, and the other a few days or weeks later.

— Can I prevent a cataract?

There is no proven medicine to prevent cataracts. Wearing sunglasses and a hat, not smoking, drinking less alcohol and managing diabetes may help slow them.
