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Frequently Asked Questions: Cataract Surgery

Lens Implant

Will I need eyeglasses or contact lenses after surgery?

If you choose the standard (Monofocal) lens implant, you will either need glasses for near vision or distance vision, depending on whether you would like the lens implant in your eye to be aimed for distance vision or near vision. For example, if you choose to be aimed for distance vision, you will need glasses for near vision.

If you choose the Monofocal Toric Lens implant, while your astigmatism will be treated, you will still need either glasses for near vision or distance vision, depending on whether you would like the lens implant in your eye to be aimed for distance vision or near vision. Ask your doctor if you qualify for this lens implant.

If you choose the Multifocal lens implant, your dependence on glasses or contact lenses will be minimized and there is a very good chance that you will not need glasses for most daily activities. However, there may be certain situations in which you could benefit from readers or a small glasses prescription (for example, low light reading). The Multifocal lens implant can be with or without the Toric. Ask your doctor if you qualify for this lens implant

Why doesn't insurance (or Medicare) pay for premium lens implants (Toric or Multifocal)?

Insurance providers cover to a certain percentage the traditional blade method surgery and the cost of a standard (monofocal) lens implant. Unfortunately, they will not pay for services that reduce dependence on glasses or contact lenses. Also, they will not pay for use of a laser for cataract surgery. No insurance provider will cover any upgrades.

Can I have a premium lens implant (Toric or Multifocal) placed later?

While this is possible, this is not recommended, as it would require another surgery. We recommend that if you are interested in a premium lens implant, the best time to place it is during cataract surgery, not a later time. The possibility of doing a later surgery to exchange the lens implant should be discussed with your doctor.

Is healing different if I get a premium lens implant (Toric or Multifocal)?

Recovery from cataract surgery is the same, whether you receive a standard (monofocal) or premium (Toric or Multifocal) lens implant. There can be a small adaptation period (few weeks to a few months) with a premium lens implant, as the brain adjusts to its use. This is situational for each patient.

Are there treatment options to help with my glaucoma during cataract surgery?

There are several treatment options to treat glaucoma during cataract surgery. Please talk to your doctor to discuss your options.

What is the difference between laser-assisted surgery and traditional blade method surgery?

With the Traditional Blade method, the surgeon manually makes the incisions with the blade and manually breaks down the cataract for removal. Laser-assisted surgery is the newest technology available: the laser creates a more precise incision, breaks down the cataract more precisely and easily, and can correct minor astigmatism. Laser-assisted surgery has a shorter recovery time compared to the traditional blade surgery. Laser-assisted surgery is an additional out-of-pocket cost since it is not covered by any insurance provider.

Pre-Operative Period

How long before surgery should I stop wearing my contact lenses?

Soft Contact Lens Users: Please stop wearing these contact lenses for both eyes starting 2 weeks prior to the pre-operative/eye measurement appointment.

Hard Contact Lens Users: These contact lenses are also known as gas permeable contact lenses (GPC). Please stop wearing these lenses for both eyes starting 4-6 weeks prior to the pre-operative/eye measurement appointment. Due to the long-term effect that GPC lenses have on your eye shape, multiple evaluations may be required before proceeding with intraocular lens implant selection.

Should I continue my medications before surgery? What about blood thinners?

You can continue your regular medications throughout the pre-operative period and after surgery. If you take insulin or another medication for diabetes, please consult with your family physician to discuss not taking it the morning of your surgery day, since you will have an empty stomach that morning. Please do not take blood thinners the morning of your surgery date. Please make sure to bring an accurate list of your current medications to the surgery center.

What type of insurance fees, related to cataract surgery, should I expect to be responsible for?

There are 3 main insurance fees that your insurance will be billed for: the professional fee, facility fee, and anesthesia fee. Our office only bills your insurance for the surgeon's professional fee. The surgery center you are scheduled with handles the billing for the facility fee and anesthesia fee. Our office does not provide estimates regarding your responsibility for the doctor's professional fee; you will need to call your insurance plan and provide them with the correct CPT code to receive an accurate estimate.

Day of Surgery

Can I have breakfast or coffee before my surgery?

You will not be able to eat or drink anything starting 8 hours prior to your surgery time. If you need to take any medications (that have been previously approved by your doctor), please do so with small sips of water.

When do I arrive at the surgery center? How long will I be there for?

Due to the scheduling process at the surgery center, the confirmed surgery times are not released to our office until the day before. Once these times are received on the day prior to your surgery, the surgery coordinator will give you a call with your arrival time (which is 1.5 hours prior to your surgery start time). Expect to be at the surgery center for 3-4 hours: this includes the pre-op preparation, the surgery, and the post-op recovery.

Will I be "put under" during surgery?

You will receive minimal sedation, which provides pain control, relaxation, and a comfortable experience while you are undergoing cataract surgery. You also will not remember much from the procedure. An anesthesiologist will be monitoring you during the procedure.

Can I drive myself home after surgery?

The surgery center is liable for your safety and can only release you to someone else who can get you home safely while you are recovering from the anesthesia. Ride share transportation (for example, Uber or Lyft) is not allowed. If you do not have someone who can bring you home on day of surgery, please contact your insurance provider for possible transportation service options.

Post-Operative Care

When can I start driving?

You can drive as soon as you meet the DMV's vision standard (20/40) and feel comfortable and safe driving. This could be as early as the day after surgery.

Will it take long for my eye to recover from surgery?

It is normal to have blurry vision for a few days or more after surgery. Everyone heals slightly differently, but you should notice improvement over the first week after surgery, and it will continue onward for approximately 1 month. If your cataract surgery was more involved, recovery will be more prolonged. Your prescription eye drop medications will aid in healing, so please use them as instructed by your doctor.

What are the symptoms I should be worried about?

If you have a sudden decrease in vision, new floaters, new flashes, or increase in pain and/or redness, please call our office ASAP at (310) 829-5475 or email us at: info@smeyegroup.com.

Should I expect pain right after surgery?

You may experience low level pain, mild discomfort, or no pain at all. You may take Tylenol once you arrive home. If you are experiencing increased pain at any time, please call our office ASAP at (310) 829-5475 or email us at: info@smeyegroup.com

What are my restrictions after surgery?

For 1 week:

- Wear your eye shield (provided to you) when sleeping
- No bending with head below the waist

- No rigorous physical activity (ex: bicycling, yoga, dancing, running, speed walking, sexual intercourse, lifting items over 20 lbs., etc.) Light walking is okay.
- Sponge baths only for the first 72 hours
    - After 72 hours, no water to eye: bathe or shower normally from the neck down, use face towel to wipe your face while avoiding the eyes, avoid washing hair. Shower with eyes closed.
- No eye rubbing, no makeup
- No aggressive nose blowing or coughing
- Wear sunglasses when outside for protection and comfort (if sunlight is too bright)

For 2 weeks:

- No rigorous physical activity (ex: bicycling, yoga, dancing, running, speed walking, sexual intercourse, lifting, etc.) Light walking is okay.
- No bending with head below the waist
- No eye makeup or eye rubbing
- No water to the eye, continue showering with eyes closed

For 3 weeks:

- No pool or ocean swimming