The day of surgery:
Your ophthalmologist may ask you not to eat any solid food at least 6 hours before your surgery.
Cataract removal surgery may be done in an outpatient surgery center or in a hospital. Here is what will happen:
- Your eye will be numbed with eye drops or with an injection around the eye. You may also be given a medicine to help you relax.
- You will be awake during surgery. You may see light and movement during the procedure, but you will not see what the doctor is doing to your eye.
- Your surgeon will enter into the eye through tiny incisions (cuts, created by laser or a blade) near the edge of your cornea (the clear covering on the front of your eye). The surgeon uses these incisions to reach the lens in your eye. The surgeon will insert the new lens into place.
- Your surgeon will talk with you about how active you can be soon after surgery. He or she will tell you when you can safely exercise, drive or do other activities again.

Cataract surgery will not restore vision lost from other eye conditions such as macular degeneration, glaucoma, or diabetic retinopathy.

What are risks of cataract surgery?
Like any surgery, cataract surgery carries risks of problems or complications. Here are some of those risks:
- Eye infection.
- Bleeding in the eye.
- Ongoing swelling of the front of the eye or inside of the eye.
- Swelling of the retina (the nerve layer at the back of your eye).
- Detached retina (when the retina lifts up from the back of the eye).
- Damage to other parts of your eye.
- Pain that does not get better with over-the-counter medicine.
- Vision loss.
- The IOL implant may become dislocated, moving out of position.

Your ophthalmologist will talk with you about the risks and benefits of cataract surgery.

Summary
Cataract surgery is when your eye’s cloudy lens is removed to restore clear vision. During cataract surgery, your natural lens is removed and replaced with a clear artificial lens. That lens is called an intraocular lens (IOL).

If you have any questions about your vision, speak with your ophthalmologist. He or she is committed to protecting your sight.
What is cataract surgery?

Cataract surgery is an operation to remove your eye’s lens when it is cloudy.

The purpose of your lens is to bend (refract) light rays that come into the eye to help you see. Your own lens should be clear, but with a cataract it is cloudy. Having a cataract can be like looking through a foggy or dusty car windshield. Things may look blurry, hazy or less colorful.

The only way to remove a cataract is with surgery. Your ophthalmologist will recommend removing a cataract when it keeps you from doing things you want or need to do.

During cataract surgery, your cloudy natural lens is removed and replaced with a clear artificial lens. That lens is called an intraocular lens (IOL). Your ophthalmologist will talk with you about IOLs and how they work.

What to expect with cataract surgery

Before surgery:

Your ophthalmologist will measure your eye to set the proper focusing power for your IOL. Also, you will be asked about any medicines you take. You might be asked not to take some of these medicines before surgery.

You may be prescribed eyedrop medicines to start before surgery. These medicines help prevent infection and reduce swelling during and after surgery.

In cataract surgery, the intraocular lens replaces the eye’s natural lens.

During cataract surgery, tiny instruments are used to break apart and remove the cloudy lens from the eye.

Watch a cataract video from the American Academy of Ophthalmology’s EyeSmart program at aao.org/cataract-surgery-link.

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