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Cataract Surgery Information

We have booked you for cataract surgery. Below is some important information regarding cataract surgery, what to expect and what to look out for. Also included are details on the procedure to be performed and the hospital location, as well as your fee estimate. You will either have already or will soon receive a confirmation of the date for your cataract surgery.

I look forward to taking good care of you on the day of surgery and beyond.

Please Read This Carefully

Cataract is a very common condition, essentially representing a clouding of the natural lens of the eye. Cataract is most often associated with advancing age but can happen in younger people in certain situations. There is an abundance of information available online including on the Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Ophthalmologists website: <https://ranzco.edu/ophthalmology-and-eye-health/eye-conditions>

Cataract surgery is the most common intraocular eye surgery performed and with advances in modern technology, has become a very sophisticated, safe and quick day surgical procedure. The visual results are very often excellent and rates of patient satisfaction are exceptionally high. Thankfully complications are very infrequent. Complications can occur intra-operatively and post-operatively. Often, they can be managed successfully with good visual outcomes but there are rare occasions where permanent loss of vision occurs. During your consultation, I will have discussed the risks versus the benefits of cataract surgery, and particularly in relation to your individual case.

As mentioned above, cataract surgery is a day procedure performed under local anesthetic which is administered by your anaesthetist, often after some light sedation to help with comfort. Either a small needle or cannula is placed behind the eye to deposit a small amount of local anesthetic. This will block eye movements and pain in the majority of cases allowing minimal to no discomfort during the procedure. Most patients see very little or nothing during the procedure, although occasionally some will report preservation of vision despite adequate pain control from the anaesthetic. This is partially dependent on how the anesthetic works in the individual in question.

The cataract surgery itself generally takes between 10 and 15 minutes once your eye is sterilized and draped. There will be plenty of oxygen under the drape although if you do suffer from claustrophobia please mention this beforehand so we can assist as needed. Most patients find the surgical procedure very tolerable and often comment "that was much easier than expected". After surgery, the eye is protected with some antibiotic, an eye pad and an eye shield, which is taped to the face. Depending on the effect of the anesthetic, this dressing can be removed the evening of surgery and drops can be commenced. Should the dressing need to be left on overnight, I will inform you and the theatre staff at the end of the case.

What drops are prescribed for your surgery?

1. **Ilevro**: 1 drop the **night before surgery**, 1 drop the **morning of surgery**, then 1 drop at night for 2 weeks **after surgery** (shake well before use; use at night, before bed)
2. **Prednefrin Forte**: 1 drop every hour for the first day (after eyepad off), then 4 times/day (breakfast, lunch, dinner, bed) for 4 weeks **after surgery**
3. **Ocuflox**: 1 drop 4 times/day (breakfast, lunch, dinner, bed) for 1 week **after surgery**

Always use fresh bottles for newly operated eyes. If you are on any other eye drops, for example for glaucoma, these can continue from the day after surgery, however, a fresh bottle will need to be used. Sequential drops should be spaced 3-5 minutes apart.

How to manage your own regular medications?

You can continue all regular medications as usual with some exceptions:

1. **Warfarin**: INR required within 3 days of surgery
2. **Diabetic medications**: Insulin dose to be discussed with anaesthetist. Tablet medications to be omitted the morning of surgery.

Take other regular medications with a sip of water on the day of surgery.

How should your eye feel and look after cataract surgery?

In many cases the day after surgery people can see clearly without any discomfort. Others take longer to recover their vision but ultimately the majority of people end up within a week or two with excellent results. In some patients, once the local eye anesthetic wears off, mild irritation which is often very tolerable can be experienced for a few days. For those who may have pre-existing blepharitis, this irritation can persist for weeks and less commonly for months. I will advise you preoperatively about blepharitis and optimization of eyelids hygiene to reduce the risk of this occurring. Double vision in the first 24 hours is not uncommon as the anaesthetic wears off. On occasion, you may have a red 'bruised' eye from the anaesthetic in the bottom corner. This will clear in a week or 2 and is not of any concern. Occasionally patients will experience irritation or allergy related to the drops or the preservatives in the bottles.

What should I be looking out for after cataract surgery?

The most important thing to prevent, and recognize early should it happen, is a postoperative intraocular eye infection, called endophthalmitis. Thankfully this is uncommon with rates reported anywhere from approximately 0.1% to 0.02%. Prompt recognition and treatment are required to prevent poor outcomes which include blindness. Treatment is with urgent injections of antibiotics into the eye. Symptoms include pain, sensitivity to light, increase redness and decreased vision. The most important thing is to call me immediately on my mobile phone [0400099722] to arrange a prompt review. Should I be unavailable then you should present to the public emergency department at Canberra Hospital in Garran.

Other complications that can happen in the postoperative period include retinal detachment [flashers, floaters, shadows, decreased vision], macular edema [blurred vision, distorted vision], raised intraocular pressure [blurred vision, halos, eye pain, headache, nausea], corneal swelling [glare, halos, blurred vision, pain]. Again, early contact with me or my staff to arrange a review is the most important thing to remember.

What can I do or not to after cataract surgery?

The most important thing to remember is that we make a small incision in the eye to access the cataract and in most cases, do not use sutures as a watertight wound can be created with quick healing without the need for suturing. Therefore, rubbing the eye is to be avoided as it may open the wound allowing bacteria and other pathogens access to the eye. Good hand hygiene is also very important as well as keeping the drops at an appropriate temperature and

cleanliness. Never wipe your eye with a hanky, nor wipe your eye after petting animals, going to the toilet or gardening. I generally recommend people do not go swimming for one week. Should people want to take a shower, minimize water entering the eye. This can be achieved by directing the head of the shower away from the face or wear goggles. Flying is not contraindicated after cataract surgery [this is more important when patients have vitrectomy surgery and have a gas bubble in their eye]. I recommend light activity during the first week after cataract surgery and avoid any activity that may cause direct trauma to the eye itself. For those who play contact sports or for example tennis or squash, I would recommend refraining from these activities for up to 4 to 6 weeks postoperatively. Again, it should be remembered that the eye after cataract surgery is more vulnerable to blunt trauma than an unoperated eye and any activity that may lead to blunt trauma to the eye should be approached carefully ideally, using protective goggles.

When should I get a new prescription after cataract surgery?

Every person recovers differently after cataract surgery and particularly for older patients, corneal swelling can take several weeks to settle down. I will let you know when the right time to get a new script is once I feel the eye has fully settled.

Any other questions that you may have that I have not answered here be sure to ask me as I'll be more than happy to advise.

EMERGENCIES: DR RICHARD BARRY - 0400099722

Note: payment for elective surgery will be requested within a week of the scheduled date.