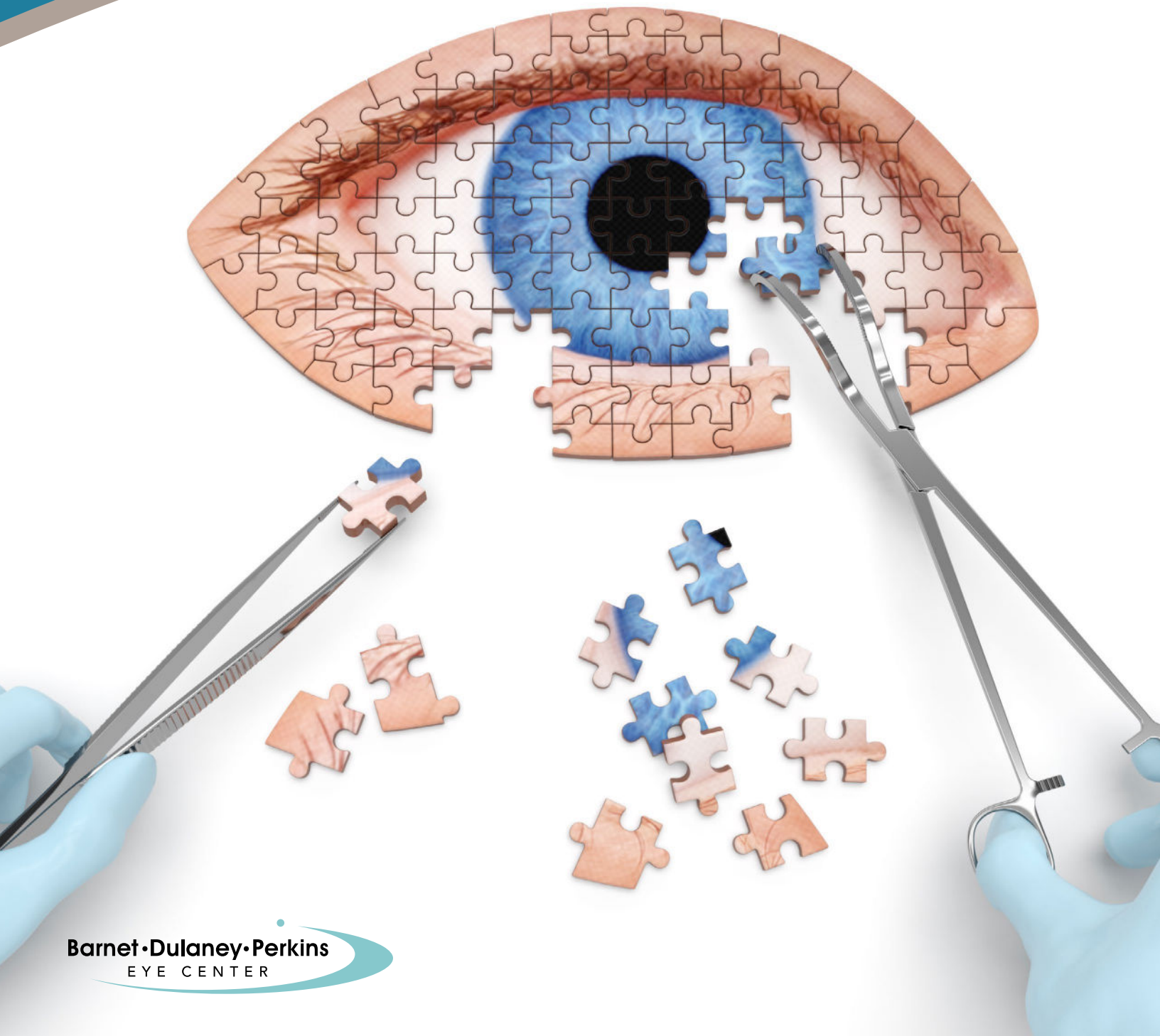


# *Complete Guide to:* **Cataract Treatment and Surgery**



If you suffer from the clouded eye lens condition known as cataracts, you want help to restore your vision before it becomes any worse. This guide walks you through the many decisions involved before cataract surgery.

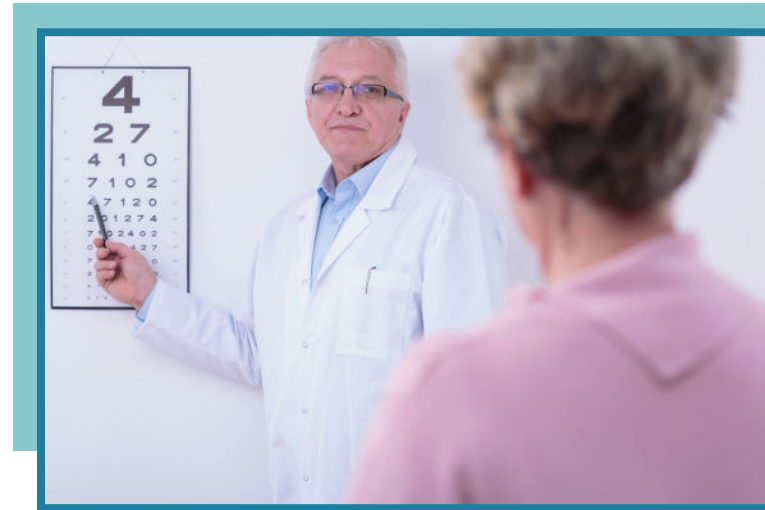
These life-changing steps include completing a self-evaluation of your symptoms, a proper medical diagnosis, deciding on the right type of surgery, what to expect during and after the surgery, watching video testimonials, considering expected costs and identifying the right clinic for you. Once you have read this guide, you will be armed with the information you need to seek proper care for your cataracts from an excellent eye clinic such as Barnet Dulaney Perkins Eye Center.

The National Eye Institute (NEI) reports that cataracts are a common eye condition affecting the lens of the eye. Over time the lens becomes cloudy, generally with a yellowish tint. This is associated with problems seeing items clearly, especially at night. In some cases, the cataract forms clumps of protein in the lens, which can make images appear distorted rather than simply faded. Cataracts can form on any portion of the lens and they usually take years to accumulate.

## Considering Cataract Surgery

The process takes several steps, from suspecting you might have cataracts to arranging for surgery. Working with an optometrist to ask and answer questions and assess the need for surgery, a qualified ophthalmologist later performs the testing necessary to determine the severity of your condition.

At that time, if you do have cataracts, the provider will discuss the next step with you. If your provider is not a surgeon the next step is a consultation with a cataract surgeon who will review the surgery with you.



### Types of Cataracts

The kind of cataract you have is classified on the reason for its origin. Senile cataracts, the most common type of cataract, denote the cataracts that many people develop as they get older. Often cataracts occurring in younger patients occur in the back part of the lens.

Secondary cataracts result from various conditions. For example, diabetes puts you at risk for diabetic retinopathy, and cataracts are a secondary condition. You can also get cataracts as a result of glaucoma surgery, radiation eye injury or medications.

### Diagnosing Cataracts

By the time you schedule an appointment to see an eye doctor, you may already know that you have a problem with your vision. It may have taken years to affect your ability to function, but you can easily tell the difference between someone who can function with their existing vision and a person who cannot. Symptoms of cataracts include:

- Faded or blurry vision
- Trouble seeing clearly at night
- Excessive glare from light

- Seeing halos around light
- Things you look at “seem yellow”
- Double vision
- Prescription changes frequently

These symptoms are all signs that you should seek a eye doctor’s assessment.

### Diagnostic Tests

When you visit your eye doctor, they will perform a number of tests to see the extent of your vision problems. You can expect them to test your visual acuity, which may then be compared to your previous visual acuity. Your eye doctor will dilate your eyes to completely examine your eyes and obtain a thorough idea of the health of your eye. With this information, your surgeon will talk to you about whether you are a good candidate for cataract surgery. This only happens if your eye doctor is an eye surgeon.

### Determining Your Eligibility

The majority of the population will eventually develop cataracts as they age, not all of these people will be treated for cataracts. This is a slowly progressing condition and those who still see well and have minor visual problems will not likely need surgery at this early stage of the cataract. Before you go to see your eye doctor, take the time to consult our [cataract self-evaluation checklist](#) to help you articulate your unique needs. Make some notes about what you want to achieve after cataract surgery.

When you first receive a diagnosis, your doctor may suggest watching the progression of your cataracts while managing your symptoms with a new glasses prescription, anti-glare sunglasses or bright lighting. If these temporary solutions become ineffective or if your vision becomes more bothersome, your eye doctor may suggest that you have cataract surgery in one or both eyes, depending on your diagnosis.

## Different Methods of Cataract Surgery

The surgical treatment for cataracts has dramatically evolved over the years. Today, a process known as phacoemulsification allows the cataract to be removed through tiny, self-sealing incisions that typically do not require stitches. Microsurgical instruments are used to gently dissolve and remove the cloudy lens. Once the cloudy part of the lens is removed, a small foldable intraocular lens is inserted and unfolds to replace the cataract. These highly advanced lenses are known as Intraocular Lenses or IOLs, and can be either standard or advanced technology lenses.

Once you have decided to move forward with cataract surgery, you have many decisions to make. People today have come to expect excellent vision after cataract surgery. Cataract surgery presents you with the opportunity to decrease your reliance on glasses.

### Advanced Technology Lenses

Previous cataract surgery technologies provided only one focal point: distance; leaving patients dependent upon reading glasses or bifocals. Recent advancements in multifocal technology now make it possible for you to read without magnifying glasses or bifocals (even trifocals), while still seeing objects at a distance. These lenses are not for everyone and some additional testing will need to be completed to determine if you are a candidate for these IOLs. Patients who have chosen these types of advanced lenses tend to be very satisfied with the results and commonly recommend them to their friends and family members who have cataracts.



### Advanced Technology Lens for Correcting Astigmatism

If you have astigmatism, (irregular shape of cornea that requires glasses or contact lenses for improving the vision) there are now options available to you to correct this during cataract surgery. The most advanced method of distance correction uses a lens called a Toric lens. The Toric lens incorporates unique optics to compensate for specific deficiencies in your vision.

### Laser Cataract Surgery

Cataract surgery is considered to be one of the most accurate and successful procedures performed in medicine today. Laser cataract surgery allows the surgeon to use a femtosecond computer-guided laser to create the initial incisions to remove the lens. This laser is designed to improve precision and reproducibility during certain challenging and delicate steps of cataract surgery.

There is also evidence to suggest that the laser is better at managing astigmatism, irregular shape of cornea. Precision in the lens removal process means that the surgeon can move quickly to the next task, that is replacing the clouded lens with a basic or advanced

technology lens.

### ORA (Optiwave Refractive Analysis)

ORA provides an analysis of your eye during cataract surgery that is not possible with conventional measurements or instruments. This technology works by directing a beam of low intensity light into the eye during surgery immediately after the cataract is removed and just before the insertion of the artificial lens (IOL). This light reflects on the back of your eye, sensors in the ORA device then analyze the reflected wave of light exiting your eye. This real time measurement allows the surgeon to address lens selection and address some aspects of astigmatism.

### Preparing for Cataract Surgery

Once you have made arrangements with your surgeon to have cataract surgery, you need to prepare for the process. Cataract surgery typically takes less than 15 minutes and is done using sedation and sometimes local anesthesia. There are a few potential complications, but they are unusual. Most people will notice an improvement in their vision within a few days.



### Preparing for Surgery

If your surgery is scheduled for shortly after your comprehensive evaluation, you will need an additional appointment prior to the surgery so your surgeon can perform a few tests. They will test your vision and analyze the shape of your cornea to determine which IOL will be best for your current needs.

The eye doctor's office will determine if you are healthy enough to have the procedure, and give you instructions on what to do the day before and on the day of surgery. If you currently wear contact lenses, you may be asked not to wear them for a few days or even a few weeks to allow your lenses to regain their normal shape. Your clinic's staff may tell you to stop eating or drinking for a certain number of hours prior to the procedure, in case of complications.

### The Day of the Surgery

When you arrive at the surgery center you will receive eye drops to dilate your pupils. The area around your eyes is cleaned. Most people who have cataract surgery are awake during the procedure, but the nerves around the target eye are anesthetized to eliminate pain and reduce movement. At this point, the surgeon can perform the procedures to remove the cloudy lens and replace it with an IOL.

After the surgery is complete, you are brought to an area to rest for a few minutes. Your eye will be covered to protect it. Instructions for after surgery will be reviewed and someone is required to drive you home. You should rest at home and plan to keep activities light for at least a few days as you start to recover.

### Recovery and Complications

After the surgery, the hardest part is over. Proper rest and recovery will minimize the likelihood that you will develop complications.

### Care After Surgery

After you arrive home, you will have some limitations on activities. Your eye may feel irritated or tender, but it is important not to rub your eyes. Your eye doctor will give you instructions on how to use your eye drops along with other information for after-surgery care of your eye. The eye drops act to significantly decrease the chance of you getting an infection in the eye and speed up the natural healing process. Wear your glasses as needed. You should avoid these activities for the first week after surgery:

- Bending at the waist
- Exercise that involves straining or lifting more than 25lbs
- Swimming or sitting in a pool, lake, ocean, or hot tub

You can expect to have follow-up appointments the day after surgery, and at least 2-3 more visits. During these visits the eye doctor will examine the eyes, evaluate the vision, check the eye pressure and other testing as needed.

### Common Complications

Like any surgery, cataract surgery has a number of potential complications that your eye doctor will help you avoid. The most common complications from cataract surgery include nausea and/or vomiting, infection, inflammation, bleeding, double vision or loss of vision. Although these risks are very uncommon, your risk for severe complications increases if you have other underlying eye problems. If you experience any of these problems, alert your eye doctor immediately so that they may contact you and determine whether a visit to the doctor's office is needed outside of normal office hours.

### Secondary Cataracts

One less-common but possible complication resulting from cataract surgery is a so-called “secondary cataract,” which in fact is not a cataract at all. This occurs in 15-30% of patients after the cataract surgery as a result of the tissue behind the lens (IOL) becoming wrinkled or cloudy. This is treated with a painless 1 minute laser treatment called a YAG laser.

A 2011 study in the journal [Clinical Ophthalmology](#) analyzed the rates at which cataract surgery patients develop secondary cataracts. Researchers showed that the likelihood of developing a secondary cataract was about 11 percent for the study. Those who had congenital or trauma-induced cataracts were more likely to develop secondary cataracts, as were those who developed other complications resulting from the cataract surgery.

### Cost/Insurance Coverage

Whenever people consider cataract surgery, they often worry about how they will pay for it. Thankfully, the majority of insurance companies consider it a medically necessary operation, and Medicare covers it, too. However, it is important for you to carefully discuss your plans with your insurance provider, because you may have to meet certain requirements before your provider will cover the surgery.

You may discover that not all components of the lens replacement may be covered. Insurance typically will pay for a basic intra-ocular lens (IOL) provided there are no other problems with the health of your eye. Typically, your insurance or healthcare service plan will pay for the outpatient surgery center fee and the cost of anesthesia, as well as the surgeon fee for cataract surgery, less any deductible or co-pay requirements.

Advanced vision technology options are not currently covered by insurance. Remember that cost should only be a factor insofar as quality is not compromised. If you discover that you have incomplete coverage but you need your cataracts removed, talk to your eye health provider about different options to make your surgery affordable.

### Success Rates and Patient Satisfaction

Ultimately, cataract surgery has a high rate of success, which is determined by the complete removal of the cataract and the placement of an IOL that improves the patient’s vision. Most people are also pleased with the process, especially if they have a eye doctor who is available to answer their questions, according to 2008 analysis in the [International Archives of Medicine](#).

There may even be some added benefits you had not imagined could be affected by your cataracts.

A 2015 study in the [Journal of Epidemiology](#) showed that cataract surgery is associated with better sleep efficiency. Researchers believe that this is because an eye that has had a cloudy lens replaced receives much more light during the day to the retina, promoting better sleep. Although you may be worried about the procedure, you should know that cataract surgery is quite common and most people who have the procedure are very glad that they did. During your research, take a moment to watch or read [patient testimonials](#). This will give you more confidence about having the procedure yourself, particularly at your chosen clinic.

### Selecting a Clinic

Before you schedule your cataract surgery, you must find the right provider who will serve your needs in a caring, efficient and professional manner. You should start by getting recommendations from your eye doctor, friends, neighbors and / or family members. Did they have a particularly good experience with a clinic or a surgeon? This will give you the confidence to know that you will be in good hands.

Once you have the names of a couple of clinics, give them a call or visit their websites to get more information. You want a doctor who has been certified by the [American Board of Ophthalmology](#), who also has lots of experience with the surgery and who uses the latest technology. It is also important to select a provider who delivers good eye care overall. Consider clinics that offer comprehensive eye care. That way, they are ready to perform your cataract surgery, as well as treat you afterward and for many years to come. Consider location, as well. You will have

several appointments related to the surgery. You should have someone available to drive you to and from at least a few of these appointments, so it helps you to select a nearby, convenient location.

The process for cataract surgery takes a lot of consideration. You want to know that you are in the right hands from the first step. When you are ready to resolve your cataract problems and dramatically improve your ability to see, contact the experts at [Barnet Dulaney Perkins Eye Center](#) for professional eye care.

Keep this checklist handy as you make phone calls and visits to prospective clinics:

- What are the surgeon's credentials and experience with cataract surgery?
- Do clinic staff members treat me with courtesy and respect?
- Is there trained staff or doctors available to answer my questions?
- What happens if I have complications from the surgery?
- Where is the nearest clinic location? Is it convenient for me?
- Can the clinic provide comprehensive eye care for me?

