

Evidence Based Interventions and Clinical Standards Policy

Patient information leaflet: Cataracts

The purpose of this leaflet is to tell you how you and your optometrist or doctor can decide the right treatment for your cataract and when you might be referred for a cataract operation.

Why are cataracts included in the Evidence Based Interventions and Clinical Standards Policy?

We want to ensure that all residents living in north central London have fair and equal access to treatments such as cataract operations.

We brought doctors, optometrists and other medical professionals from across north central London together to look at and review the latest medical practice and national guidance available. We developed our guidelines about when to refer a patient for a cataract operation based on this information. This helps us to ensure that NHS resources are used to give the best care for everyone in north central London.

What should I do if I have cataracts and think I need an operation?

A cataract causes the lens of your eye to become cloudy and makes seeing clearly difficult. If you think you have a cataract it is important that you discuss your symptoms with your optometrist or doctor. You should talk about how it is affecting you on a daily basis so that you can both agree what is right for you.

Let your optometrist or doctor know if you are having trouble going about your daily activities. Let them know if you are becoming more likely to fall and hurt yourself.

When can I be referred for a cataract operation?

You can be referred for a cataract operation if you meet both of the following conditions:

- You have a 'best corrected visual acuity' of 6/9 or worse in the affected eye. 6/9 vision means you can read a sign at 6 metres that a person with normal eyesight can read at 9 metres, using any required up to date glasses

- The cataract is stopping you doing daily activities, this could be stopping you enjoying a hobby such as playing sport or painting or watching TV, preventing you driving, or putting you at risk of tripping and falling because you cannot see clearly

You doctor or optometrist will also want to check that you understand that surgery for cataract has some risks and that you think about whether you want to have surgery before being referred. If you understand this and want to consider surgery, and you meet the two conditions, your doctor or optometrist will make a referral for you with a hospital eye clinic to discuss having a cataract operation.

What if I don't meet both conditions but my doctor or optometrist and I agree I could benefit from a cataract operation?

If you don't meet both conditions but if the cataract is having a big impact on your life, for example if you are at risk of tripping and falling, or if there is an individual and exceptional circumstance, you and your doctor may still agree that you could benefit from an operation. Decisions are made on a case by case basis, taking the person's specific circumstances into account.

Useful links

Healthcare services in north central London are bought by our five Clinical Commissioning Groups, (Barnet, Camden, Enfield, Haringey and Islington). For more information go to your Clinical Commissioning Group's (CCG) website:

- Barnet CCG, <http://www.barnetccg.nhs.uk>
- Camden CCG, <http://www.camdenccg.nhs.uk/>
- Enfield CCG, <http://www.enfieldccg.nhs.uk/>
- Haringey CCG, <http://www.haringeyccg.nhs.uk/>
- Islington CCG, <http://www.islingtonccg.nhs.uk/>

See also North London Partner's website:

<http://www.northlondonpartners.org.uk/EvidenceBasedFAQs>

Moorfields Eye Hospital cataract information for patients:

<https://www.moorfields.nhs.uk/content/patient-leaflets>