

Cataract Information – Ophthalmology Department, The Queen Elizabeth Hospital, King's Lynn

A cataract is how we refer to the clouding of the lens in the eye which hinders allowing light to pass to the retina. When the lens is clouded, light does not pass to the retina properly, affecting a person vision considerably. A cataract prevents the lens from properly bending the light to the retina, making an image more dull or misty.

Whatever the thickness of the cataract, it can be removed easily at any time. Though it is difficult to predict the speed with which they will develop, cataracts do worsen with time – the thicker the cataract, the worse your sight will become. Removal is thus very important. Until then, magnifiers can help cataract sufferers to continue to read and dark glasses may help in areas of bright light.

The Queen Elizabeth Hospital NHS Foundation Trust routinely removes cataracts from a wide range of patients, and has several members of staff and the best facilities to achieve this. The operation is such a routine occurrence that you will only need to be admitted as a day case – the operation itself will take just 20–30 minutes, with some time beforehand for the local anaesthetic to take effect.

Sight is usually returned well after an operation, though glasses are often necessary for perfect vision since the plastic lens implant which will replace the cataract cannot focus in the same way as a natural lens.