



Lens Implant Choices After Cataract Surgery

The lens of your eye is an important structure. In order to see clearly at all distances (from up close to far away), your eye must be able to change its focus power. The lens of your eye is responsible for this change in focus—it changes its shape to bring whatever you're looking at into clear focus. In your early 40s, you lost the ability to see up close and required bifocals or at least reading glasses. This was because as we age, the lens hardens and cannot change its shape anymore and, in order to focus at different distances, more than one eyeglasses power was required.

As we age even more, the lens becomes cloudy. This cloudiness of the lens is called a cataract. Cataract is a common problem, and cataract surgery is the most common surgery performed on adults in the United States. In cataract surgery, the cloudy lens is removed. In order for you to see clearly afterward, a new lens (called an intraocular lens implant, or IOL) must be inserted at the time of surgery.

Selecting the right implant for your eye is very important for your vision after surgery. Your doctor will take measurements before your surgery to determine the correct implant strength for your eye. If you wear glasses, the implant strength can be adjusted to change the thickness of your glasses and reduce your need for glasses.

Several options are available to help you minimize—or possibly eliminate—your need for any type of glasses after cataract surgery. For instance, your doctor may place implants in your eyes with the appropriate strength for you to see well at a distance, and you can wear reading glasses when you want to see up close, such as for reading. This is the most common lens choice.

Another option is for your doctor to select the implant strength for you to see clearly off at a distance for one eye, and a different strength—the one for up close—for your other eye, so you can see clearly at most distances without glasses after surgery. This works well for most people, but some people have trouble with depth perception when their two eyes are focused at different distances.

In recent years, several types of toric, bifocal and/or multifocal implants have been developed. These lenses allow you to see clearly at a variety of distances, reducing the need for glasses. It should be noted, however, that multifocal lens technology is evolving rapidly, and patients are encouraged to consult with their doctor about new offerings.

Talk with your doctor about the various types of implants available and their effects on your vision after surgery. You and your doctor will develop a plan that pairs you with the best type of implants for your eyes and your vision needs.



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