

Cataracts and Glaucoma: What You Need to Know

How is a cataract different from glaucoma?

Cataracts cause reversible vision loss from a cloudy lens. Glaucoma is a disease that causes irreversible vision loss when the nerve that connects the eye to the brain gets damaged from eye pressure.

Will cataract surgery bring back vision loss from glaucoma?

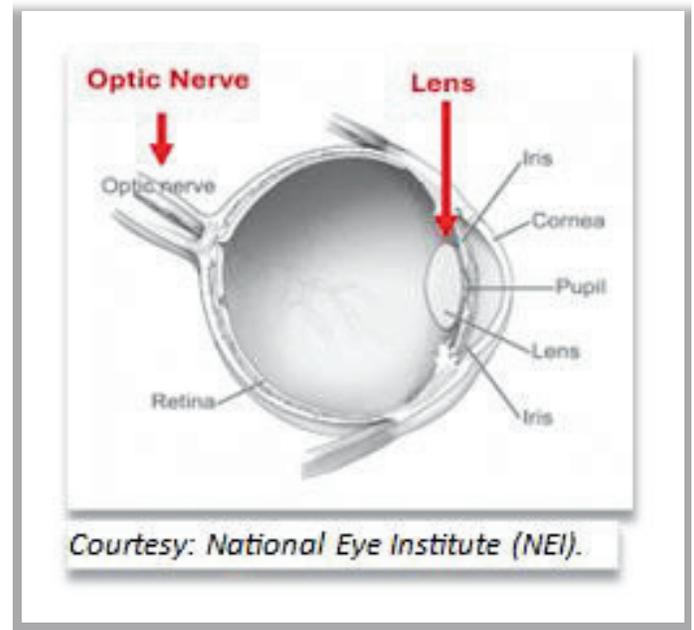
No, vision loss from glaucoma is not reversible. Only the vision loss caused by cataracts can get better after cataract surgery.

Why would my doctor talk about glaucoma surgery at the same time as cataract surgery?

- If your eye pressure is too high for your eye.
- If your glaucoma is getting worse.
- If you want to try to use fewer eye drops.
- To try to avoid needing more glaucoma surgery in the future.

If you have glaucoma, are there more risks AFTER cataract surgery?

Yes, eye pressure can go up in the first days after cataract surgery. Eye pressure can also go up due to steroid eye drops that are used after surgery weeks later. If you already had a glaucoma surgery before, it might not work as well after cataract surgery.



If you have glaucoma, are there more risks DURING cataract surgery?

Some types of glaucoma can cause more concerns in cataract surgery. This does NOT mean you should not have cataract surgery, and in some cases having cataract surgery sooner lowers your risk in the long term. Some types of glaucoma that have higher rates of complications during cataract surgery include pseudoexfoliation, traumatic, narrow angle, inflammatory and neovascular. Talk to your doctor about the risks and benefits in your case and the best time for your surgery.

Can cataracts cause glaucoma?

It depends on the type of glaucoma.

The most common type of glaucoma, called "Primary Open Angle Glaucoma," is NOT caused by cataracts.

The second most common type of glaucoma, called "Narrow Angle Glaucoma," CAN be made worse by cataracts. As a cataract gets bigger it can crowd the natural drain, causing fluid in the eye to build up and increase pressure. By removing the cataract, it can open up space for the fluid to drain through the natural drain again.

What types of glaucoma surgeries are combined with cataract surgeries?

Micro Invasive Glaucoma Surgery (MIGS)

MIGS is a type of surgery that can lower eye pressure by targeting the natural drain of the eye. Examples include stents that help open the natural drain or procedures that remove damaged layers of the natural drain. These are usually best for mild or moderate glaucoma but can also be used in advanced stages. Compared to traditional glaucoma surgery, MIGS have lower risks of complications, but also can have less pressure lowering than some bigger glaucoma surgeries.

Traditional glaucoma surgery (such as trabeculectomy or tube shunt)

If you have advanced glaucoma, quickly worsening glaucoma, or very high eye pressure, your doctor may recommend traditional glaucoma surgery while you have cataract surgery. It takes longer to heal from these surgeries compared to cataract surgery alone or cataract surgery with MIGS, but they can be very good at keeping the eye pressure low long term.

Laser (cyclophotocoagulation [CPC])

CPC laser can lower eye pressure by decreasing how much fluid the eye makes. These lasers can cause inflammation, or other side effects, and are only offered to certain patients.

Does glaucoma affect what type of intraocular lens (IOL) should be put in my eye during cataract surgery?

When your cataract is removed, a new artificial lens implant is put in its place. There are several types of lenses, and some are better than others for people with glaucoma.

The standard "monofocal" lens:

These lenses give the best vision for EITHER distance OR up close, not BOTH. You will still need some glasses after surgery. These lenses let the most light into the eye and do not affect your ability to see shades of light and dark. They are the most common lenses for people with glaucoma.

Astigmatism-correcting "toric monofocal" lens:

This lens is for people with a lot of astigmatism (where the shape of the eye is more oval than round). This lens can work well in people with glaucoma. You will still need some type of glasses after surgery to get the best vision. If you need more glaucoma surgery in the future, then astigmatism may come back and you might need to change your glasses to correct the astigmatism again.

"Multifocal" and "extended depth of focus" lenses:

These lenses try to give you good vision at both far and near without glasses. The tradeoff is that they reduce the amount of light that comes into the eye. This can be a problem for people with glaucoma since the optic nerve is damaged and you need more light to see better. Often, these are NOT good options for people with glaucoma. You need to talk to your doctor about your risks and benefits before choosing this type of lens.

Every person is different, so talk with your doctor to see what is best for you.



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