

This means we have to make sure the treatments we do spend money on will work and will improve people's health.

By doing this, we can continue to fund the many thousands of operations, treatments, appointments and prescriptions which take place in Somerset each year. To make this work we have to prioritise treatments. This means that some conditions will not be treated unless they are causing a problem in your daily life.

### More information

You can find more information on cataracts online, either through [www.cks.nhs.uk](http://www.cks.nhs.uk) or [www.patient.co.uk](http://www.patient.co.uk)

### Useful contacts

#### NHS Somerset Clinical Commissioning Group

Wynford House  
Lufton Way  
Yeovil  
Somerset  
BA22 8HR

Phone: 01935 384000

Fax: 01935 384079

Email: [reception.wynford@nhs.net](mailto:reception.wynford@nhs.net)

Website: [www.somersetccg.nhs.uk](http://www.somersetccg.nhs.uk)

#### Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

Phone: 0800 0851 067

Email: [somccg.pals@nhs.net](mailto:somccg.pals@nhs.net)

NHS Somerset Clinical Commissioning Group,  
Wynford House, Lufton Way,  
Yeovil, Somerset, BA22 8HR  
Phone: 01935 384000 Fax: 01935 384079  
Email: [reception.wynford@nhs.net](mailto:reception.wynford@nhs.net)

## Cataracts

Information for patients in Somerset



Information on how decisions  
about cataract operations  
are made in Somerset

## Introduction

This leaflet explains how decisions about cataract operations are made in Somerset and what this means to you as a patient.

## When are the risks of cataract surgery justified?

A cataract may not affect your ability to undertake day to day tasks, nor lead to longer term complications, for months or years after the cataract is first diagnosed. Therefore, even if your optometrist has told you that you have a cataract, it may not need treatment at that time.

Currently the only effective treatment for cataracts is surgical removal and replacement of the affected lens.

## When does my cataract need to be removed?

Your optometrist will measure your vision, including your visual acuity. Visual acuity is the main measure of how well you can see.

It is the best vision obtained when you are wearing your up to date spectacles or contact lenses.

A visual acuity of better than 6/12, using the standard letter chart, usually allows a person to function without significant visual difficulties. It also closely relates to the standard set by the DVLA for a license to drive.

If the level of visual acuity is better than 6/12 and your vision is not causing difficulties in your daily life or with your occupation, then you will not be referred for surgery. Surgery will only normally be offered when your vision is significantly affected by your cataract, that is, when the vision is measured by your optometrist at 6/12 or worse.

However, the level of visual disability caused by the presence of a cataract varies considerably between individuals. Your lifestyle and occupation need to be considered and if, for example, your job involves a lot of driving, particularly at night, then this will also need to be taken into account.

## How will my cataract be monitored?

Having identified that you have a cataract, your optometrist will continue to check your eyesight at your regular eye test. They can tell you when your vision is at a stage when it is likely that you will be offered an operation and will refer you as appropriate.

## What if I develop a cataract in my second eye?

If you develop a cataract in your second eye, you will be referred to a consultant who will discuss the possibility of surgery and the likely benefits with you. They will also consider the risks of second eye surgery.

## Why set priorities?

We are committed to making the best use of resources to improve the health of Somerset's population. We have to balance very carefully the health needs of our population with the resource that is available.

If you are diagnosed with a cataract you may not necessarily need treatment immediately

