

## Preparing for cataract surgery

- The eye is like a camera, with lenses at the front and photographic film (the retina) at the back. There are two lenses: first, the clear window at the front of the eye (the cornea); and second, the lens inside the eye. By changing shape, the lens inside the eye can change the focus from distant to near objects.
- The lens inside the eye enlarges and hardens with time and can gradually become cloudy. This is called a cataract. Most cataracts are due to the ageing process but some can be caused by inflammation, diabetes or injury.
- Your sight will gradually become misty and you may be troubled by glare in bright lights. Some patients with early cataract notice that they can read without glasses for a while but the distance vision gets worse.
- If symptoms of the cataract affect your day-to-day activities, you will need an operation. A cataract does not need to be fully developed or 'ripe' before surgery. A plastic lens is used to replace the cataract.
- Before the operation, the size and shape of your eye will be measured using a painless laser machine to find out how much focusing power the plastic lens will need to correct your vision. This is called biometry, and will only take a few minutes.
- Just before surgery, the pupil is widened with drops. The surgical procedure is usually done with a local anaesthetic injection and/or drops, but you may need a general anaesthetic if you are claustrophobic or have a head tremor. The operation takes between 20 and 30 minutes.

