

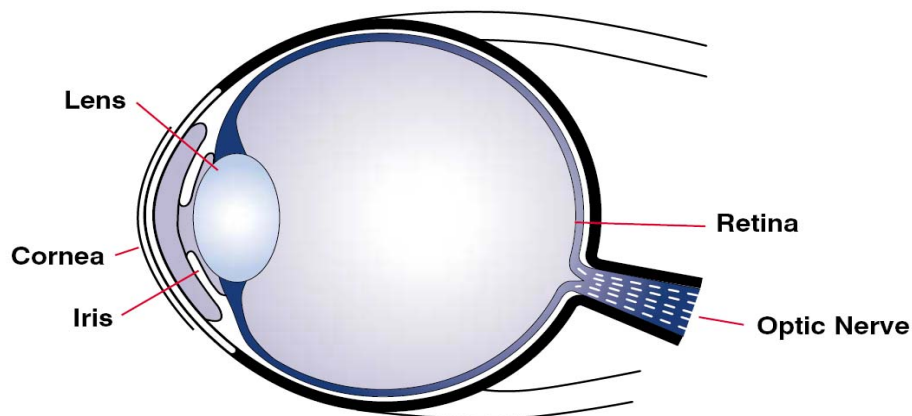
## CATARACT

What we see is in fact made in the brain. The brain makes sight from signals given to it by the eyes.

### What is the normal structure of the eye?

The eye is made of three parts.

- A light focusing part at the front (cornea and lens).
- A light sensitive film at the back of the eye (retina).
- A large collection of communication wires to the brain (optic nerve).



### What is Cataract?

Cataract is when the normally clear lens of the eye becomes cloudy. If the lens is not clear then not all the light can get into the eye and vision is often blurred.

There are many different types of cataract. Some are present at birth. Some develop later. One or both eyes may be affected.

## How does this affect the way my child sees?

### **Vision**

Cataracts usually cause blurring of vision in the affected eye(s). Most children with cataract in only one eye usually have good vision in the other. These children do not normally complain of blurred vision. If both eyes have cataracts they are much more likely to have serious visual impairment.

How blurred the vision might be depends on:

- How cloudy the lens is
- Which part of the lens is cloudy
- Whether the child has developed a 'lazy' eye
- Whether the eye has other conditions that might reduce vision

If only a small area of the lens away from the centre is cloudy, then the child is likely to have good vision. If the centre of the lens is very cloudy, not letting much light in, then the child is more likely to have poor vision.

### **Glare**

Some children may be more sensitive to bright light.

### **Lazy eye (amblyopia)**

This is when one eye sees better than the other and occurs when the difference between the two eyes is more than can be explained by the cataract. The 'lazy eye' has the poorer vision.

### **Squint**

This is when one eye turns inwards or outwards.  
This is because the eyes are not working together.

### **What can be done to help?**

Cataracts are only removed if they are causing significantly blurred or reduced vision.

### **Surgery**

The lens of the eye is removed. Once the lens has been removed, it needs to be replaced by another lens. This can be a spectacle lens, a contact lens or a small plastic lens inside the eye (intraocular lens).

### **Glasses**

Changes in the lens of the eye may mean that children need glasses even when surgery is not needed.

### **Tinted lenses and a peaked hat.**

May help to reduce glare.

### **Patching**

The lazy eye may need extra help to see by using a patch on the better eye.

### **Squint.**

Sometimes an operation can be done to correct a squint.

### **How can parents, family, friends and teachers make a difference?**

**With this condition it is extremely important that you keep ALL your eye appointments. Your child's vision needs to be monitored very closely.**

- Ensure that your child wears their glasses or contact lenses as instructed.
- Ensure that the patching routine is followed.
- Use bright toys and lights to encourage your child to use their vision.

## Useful contacts.



### **Birmingham Focus on Blindness**

Tel: 0121 478 5200

### **RNIB**

Tel: 0845 766 9999

### **LOOK (or families with visually impaired children)**

Tel: 0121 428 5038

### **CATS EYES (support group)**

PO BOX 5421

Poole

BH15 2XQ

Tel: 0141 632 8892

[www.geocities.com/catseyeswebsite](http://www.geocities.com/catseyeswebsite)

**This information is intended to describe most aspects of the condition but each child is different and there will always be exceptions.**

### **Acknowledgements**

This leaflet was compiled by a multidisciplinary team from the eye departments at Birmingham Children's Hospital and Birmingham Heartlands Hospital, Birmingham Focus on Blindness and Birmingham Specialist Support Services.