

## Threshold for cataract surgery

The threshold for referring a patient for cataract surgery is 6/12 in the worst eye.

The following is an extract from the policy on Low Priority Treatments Version 12, September 2012, based on OPCS 4.6 and ICD 10, and gives useful information relating to the cataract surgery threshold and agreed exceptions.

### Cataract surgery, section 8.2

Since the level of visual acuity that an individual requires to function without altering their lifestyle varies, measurements of visual acuity do not necessarily reflect the degree of visual disability patients may experience as a result of cataracts. The criteria set out below attempt to explicitly take that into account.

The legal visual requirement for driving falls somewhere between 6/9 and 6/12 (strictly speaking it is based on the number plate test), and it is anticipated that the threshold set out below will not render the majority of people unable to drive. This policy also recognises the increasing body of evidence that second eye surgery does benefit patients. The policy statement below applies to both first and second eyes, with a best corrected visual acuity of 6/12 or worse in the affected eye used as the threshold for cataract surgery.

Unless one or more of the following criteria are met, a best corrected visual acuity of **better** than 6/12 in the affected eye will not normally be funded:

- Patients who are still working in an occupation in which good acuity is essential to their ability to continue to work (e.g. watchmaker) **OR**
- Patients with posterior subcapsular cataracts and those with cortical cataracts who experience problems with glare and a reduction in acuity in daylight or bright conditions **OR**
- Patients who need to drive at night who experience significant glare due to cataracts which affects driving **OR**
- Difficulty with reading due to lens opacities **OR**
- Patients with visual field defects borderline for driving, in whom cataract extraction would be expected to significantly improve the visual field **OR**
- Significant optical imbalance (anisometropia or anisekonia) following cataract surgery on the first eye **OR**
- Patients with glaucoma who require cataract surgery to control intra ocular pressure **OR**
- Patient with diabetes who require clear views of their retina to look for retinopathy **OR**
- Patients with wet macular degeneration or other retinal conditions who require clear views of their retina to monitor their disease or treatment (e.g. treatment with anti-VEGFs).

NB: The reasons why the patient's vision and lifestyle are adversely affected by cataract and the likely benefit from surgery, or other exceptional circumstances, must be clearly documented in the clinical records.