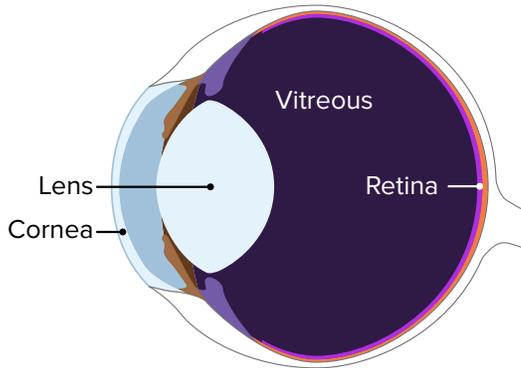


Cataract Surgery

A cataract is any opacity within the lens of the eye. The lens sits within the eye and helps to focus images onto the retina. Cataracts can be caused by genetics, diabetes, aging, and other diseases of the eye, such as retinal disease or inflammation. If cataracts are severe enough, visual deficits can be noted at home or in unfamiliar environments (e.g. bumping into things, missing treats or stairs).

Diagrammatic cross section of the eye



Mature cataract in a dog with diabetes mellitus.



Typical appearance of a lens implant in a dog three months postoperatively, with mild wrinkling in the center of the lens capsule and mild fibrosis around the periphery.

What do I need to do for my pet prior to cataract surgery?

In order to ensure the best chance of vision after cataract surgery, the health of both eyes and the animal are evaluated. This includes:

Health of the Eye

- Complete ophthalmic exam by an ophthalmologist, including tests to evaluate tear production and intraocular pressure
- Electroretinogram (ERG) – this is an electrical test used to evaluate the health of the retina behind the lens, usually performed without general anesthesia
- Ultrasound of the eye to evaluate the structural integrity of the lens, retina and fluid behind the lens (the vitreous)

Health of the Animal

- Physical exam, including listening to the heart and lungs
- Basic blood and urine tests to evaluate the overall health of the animal

Diabetic animals should receive additional diagnostics

- Fructosamine and/or glucose curve should be performed by your referring veterinarian to evaluate for adequate diabetic control (occasional spot-checks at home are not adequate prior to surgery)
- Urine culture collected sterilely directly from the bladder, to ensure there is no active urinary tract infection present

These evaluations should be performed within one month of the planned surgery to ensure we have the most up-to-date picture of your pet's health.

If we have concerns regarding the health of your pet or your pet's eye, we may recommend additional treatments or diagnostics prior to surgery.

If the evaluations indicate that the chance of good vision after surgery is low, or if anesthesia or surgery may compromise the health of your pet, we may not recommend going forward with cataract surgery.



Cataract Surgery - continued

What are the risks of surgery?

Cataract surgery is generally safe and effective in restoring long-term vision in 80 to 90 percent of cases. There are risks with any medical procedure and cataract surgery is no exception. Some of these complications, such as uveitis (intraocular inflammation), are expected following surgery and can be successfully managed medically with a good outcome. Vision-threatening complications, such as secondary glaucoma and retinal detachment, may occur either shortly after or months to years after surgery. Unfortunately, with these complications, your pet could lose both vision and comfort, which may necessitate removal of the eye in severe cases.

There is no way to predict who will have a successful outcome or complications, but dogs with pre-existing ocular disease (e.g. inflammation or dry eyes) may have increased risk of complications. Some breeds have been shown to have an increased risk with cataract surgery. Your cataract surgeon will discuss any specific concerns regarding the risks of surgery for your pet.

What should I expect after cataract surgery?

Post-operative care and evaluations are very important to ensure a good outcome with cataract surgery. Your pet will likely go home with several topical eye medications that will need to be given 2 to 4 times per day for at least a few months. You can expect to dedicate at least 15 to 20 minutes to apply the medications each time during the day to allow for the proper absorption of the medications.

We recommend follow-up visits so we can evaluate the eyes to ensure that they are recovering well and without complications after surgery and adjust the medications accordingly. Usually recheck exams are scheduled 2 weeks, 6 to 8 weeks, 4 to 5 months, and 8 to 10 months, then approximately every 6 months after surgery. More may be scheduled, depending on how well the eyes heal. We recommend that the eyes be evaluated regularly long-term after surgery to ensure they remain healthy and visual.

If you are unable to give medications or eye drops to your pet, or if you are unable to have your pet rechecked after the surgery with a veterinary ophthalmologist, we may not recommend surgery.

Frequently Asked Questions

1. What are the costs of the surgery?

The estimated cost of the initial eye exam and diagnostics is approximately \$200

Surgery (ERG, ultrasound, blood work included) is approximately \$4,500-\$4,700 (includes both eyes)

These costs are only estimates and may increase or decrease depending on the nature of the cataracts, the presence of systemic disease (e.g. diabetes), and if complications occur during or after surgery.

2. How long will my pet have to wear a cone?

Your pet will have to wear a cone (E-collar) for at least 2 to 4 weeks after surgery in order to make sure they do not damage the stitches that are placed in the eye. This is important because if they traumatize the surgery site there is an increased chance of infection or ulceration, which could jeopardize vision or comfort.

3. Can the cataracts come back after surgery?

True cataract regrowth does not occur after surgery. However, some residual lens cells can turn into scar tissue, tiny bubbles or mild regrowth of lens material within the lens capsule. These changes may require longer term anti-inflammatory drops to prevent any low-grade inflammation, but they rarely significantly impair the vision or require additional surgical removal. These changes are more common in very young or diabetic dogs.

4. Will my pet be able to see immediately after surgery?

In most cases, yes. If the cataracts are the sole reason for visual impairment, most of our patients are able to see much better after the surgery. The vision may not be crystal clear at first because some cloudiness occurs from the procedure, but that should improve with time.

Have more questions?

Please don't hesitate to contact the Comparative Ophthalmology Service at 614-292-3551 to let us know if you have any further questions or concerns about cataract surgery or your pet's eyes.

