

Paediatric information: 8-12 years

# Cataracts in children

The proper name is congenital cataract, but we often call it childhood cataract. Your pupil is the small black circle in the centre of your eye. Just behind it, inside your eye, is a lens which helps you see clearly. The lens should be clear like glass. But a cataract (pronounced cat-ar-act) makes the lens cloudy.



**If you have cataracts, things may look blurry like the right hand side of this picture.**

## How does the world look to me?

If you have cataracts as a baby or a child you may not realise it. You might think your eyesight is normal and that everyone sees things the way you do. But cataracts usually make your vision less clear and in some children, vision may be very blurry.

## How do I look to the world?

Sometimes the pupil of your eye can become white and cloudy if a cataract is not treated but often your cataract can't be noticed by other people.

## Did you know?

In the UK it is normally older people over the age of 50 who have cataracts, and children rarely get them. But if you do have a cataract, it could be because one of your parents had them too when they were young. On the other hand, there may be no real reason and you may have just developed a cataract by chance.

## How can the doctor tell?

Usually you will have eye tests when you are a baby. The tests will show if you already have a cataract at that age. It is important to have your eyes checked regularly as you get older. An optician can quickly tell if you have cataracts, even if you or your parents have never noticed anything wrong.

If an optician thinks you have a cataract you will be sent to an eye hospital to have your eyes examined by eye doctors (ophthalmologists) using a microscope. They may also use a test

called an ultrasound to show what the inside of your eye looks like.



**Left: What cataracts can look like.**

**Right: an eye examination using a microscope**

### Getting it sorted

It is important that children with cataracts are examined as early as possible. If they have a cataract in both eyes, and the cataracts are affecting the vision badly, they can be treated by having an operation. During the operation, the lens in your eye will be removed and may be replaced with a new one.

### Getting better

After the operation it may take a while for your vision to improve. You will need regular appointments at the hospital to have your eyes checked.

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### Moorfields Direct telephone helpline

Phone: 020 7566 2345

Monday-Friday, 8.30am-9pm

Saturday, 9am-5pm

Information and advice on eye conditions and treatments from experienced ophthalmic-trained nurses.

### Patient advice and liaison service (PALS)

Phone: 020 7566 2324/ 020 7566 2325

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

Moorfields' PALS team provides confidential advice and support to help you with any concerns you may have about the care we provide, guiding you through the different services available at Moorfields. The PALS team can also advise you on how to make a complaint.

### Your right to treatment within 18 weeks

Under the NHS constitution, all patients have the right to begin consultant-led treatment within 18 weeks of being referred by their GP. Moorfields is committed to fulfilling this right, but if you feel that we have failed to do so, please contact our patient advice and liaison service (PALS) who will be able to advise you further (see above). For more information about your rights under the NHS constitution, visit [www.nhs.uk/choiceinthenhs](http://www.nhs.uk/choiceinthenhs)