

## **Cataract Surgery Recovery Rehearsal Guide**

*Preparing people with intellectual disability/autism (ID/A)  
to successfully recover after cataract surgery*

## Introduction for Caregivers

A rehearsal guide contains realistic pictures, concrete ideas, and clear, brief instructions for guiding a person through what can be expected in a specific situation. It includes helpful suggestions for caregivers to follow to make the experience meaningful for the person and increase the likelihood of a successful outcome. This approach is beneficial when supporting people with intellectual disability/autism (ID/A) who are anxious about situations such as doctors' appointments, hospitalizations, and medical testing.

A rehearsal guide provides opportunities for the caregiver to assist the person to learn about a specific situation. It contains information on what is needed and why and explains exactly what can be expected. Such a guide is most effective when it is person-centered and used in conjunction with discussion to allow exploration of specific areas of concern. It can be a powerful tool when used as intended.

The expected result is that the person will then experience the situation in a way that supports health and well-being by being prepared and knowing what to expect. The guide can be used at all stages of the situation to facilitate a positive end result.

Thank you for taking the time to use this tool to work with self-advocates to improve their health outcomes.

## How to Use This Rehearsal Guide

For best results, begin to review this rehearsal guide with the person prior to the day of the appointment. Sometimes it will help to review this material with an individual several days or weeks before an appointment; other times, it may be better to wait to review this material until just before the procedure is to take place, perhaps the day before or the morning of the procedure. Together with the individual, determine which will best suit the individual's needs and abilities in understanding the information provided; however, it is important not to wait until 5 minutes before a procedure to introduce this guide to an individual. Give the individual enough time in advance to become familiar with the procedure based on the pictures and information contained on each page and with the individual's abilities in mind.

It is best to review this guide slowly and to focus on one idea/page at a time, allowing the person to talk and/or ask questions after each idea/page is presented. A caregiver may want to share personal experiences related to having this procedure done but be sure to do so in a positive manner, depicting a positive outcome.

## For Best Practices

- ✓ Allot time to review this material when the individual is alert and interested in doing so.
- ✓ Ensure that the setting is free from distraction. Based on the individual's attention span, it may be best to review one page at a time, rather than reviewing an entire guide in one sitting.
- ✓ Explain each picture and practice the suggested exercises with the individual, such as deep breathing, as they appear throughout the guide.
- ✓ On the day of the procedure, take this guide along to continue rehearsing the various steps involved in the procedure. Review each page step by step.
- ✓ Remain positive, calm, and upbeat.
- ✓ Remember to offer positive reinforcement throughout the procedure. If the procedure is not able to be completed, focus on positive aspects. If the individual seems upset, talk about it later when they are calm to find out how they felt and what could be changed or improved to have a better outcome the next time.

# INTRODUCING THE PROCESS

*(Name of individual)*, you are going to be recovering from your cataract surgery on *(insert date here)*.

The doctor ordered this surgery for you to help improve your vision.

*(Name of caregiver)* will be helping you to safely recover and take care of your eye while it is healing.

It can take between two weeks and several months to fully recover from this surgery.



"Roger Eye Surgery 010" by roger mommaerts is licensed under CC BY-SA 2.0

# AFTER THE SURGERY

*(Name of individual)*, when your surgery is done, you may feel sleepy for a little while, especially if you were given medicine to help you relax or fall asleep. This will go away soon.

There will be healthcare professionals there to take care of you. It is okay to listen to them and tell them how you're feeling.

Your eye that was operated on will have a bandage over it. This is to protect the eye. It's important that you don't try to remove the bandage or touch your eye. The bandage usually stays on for one day.



"Eye Surgery Post OP\_143" by Blind Grasshopper is licensed under CC BY-ND 2.0

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## GOING HOME

You're usually able to go home on the same day that you had your surgery. (*Name of caregiver*) will help get you home safely and review the important things that you need to DO and NOT DO while you are recovering.



"Eye Surgery - Post-Op" by ex\_magician is licensed under CC BY-NC-ND 2.0

You will go back to your doctor in the next couple of days to have your eye checked. It's important to make sure your eye is healing properly. The doctor will also give you instructions on how to continue taking care of your eye.

# WHEN YOUR BANDAGE COMES OFF:

*(Name of individual)*, when the doctor says that it is safe to take the bandage off of your eye, you may notice that your vision is blurry. This is normal. It can take a few days for your vision to improve. You may notice that colors seem brighter. This is because the cataract is gone.

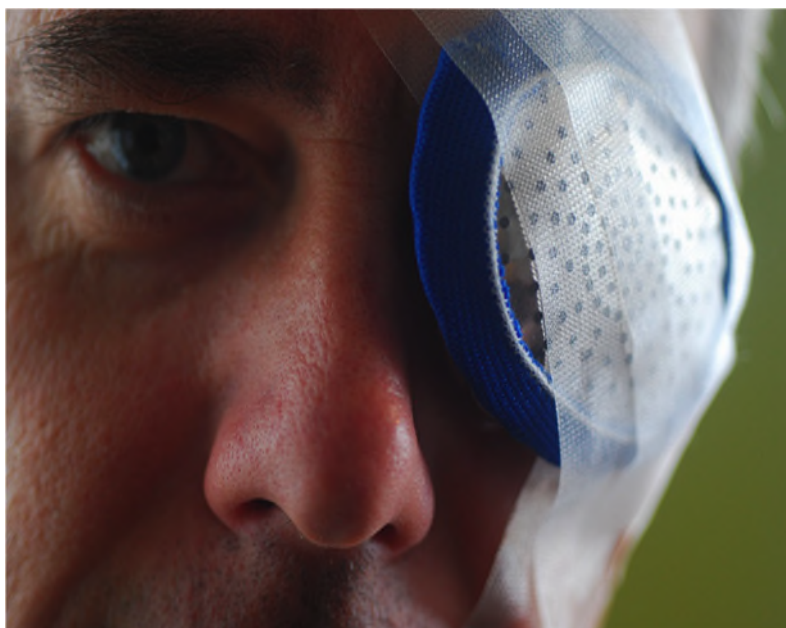


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## PROTECTING YOUR HEALING EYE

You may feel like your eye is itchy, or like something is in your eye. This is normal, too, and usually goes away in a few days.

It is very important that you don't rub, scratch, or press on your eye. This could damage your eye while it is healing.



Because of this, your doctor may want you to wear a protective shield over your eye for a couple of days, and for up to a week at night, while you're sleeping. This will keep your eye safe while you're sleeping, so it doesn't get bumped or pushed on, in your bed or on your pillow.

## TAKE CARE AFTER SURGERY



Once you're home from your eye surgery, there are some things that your doctor may tell you to **DO** or **NOT** to **DO**.

### **DO:**

- Take it easy for a few days after your surgery
- Use eye drops, if given by your doctor, as instructed
- Read or watch TV as you usually do
- Wear your eye shield during the day for as long as ordered
- Wear your eye shield at night, while sleeping, for at least a week
- Wear glasses that provide sun protection for as long as your doctor tells you



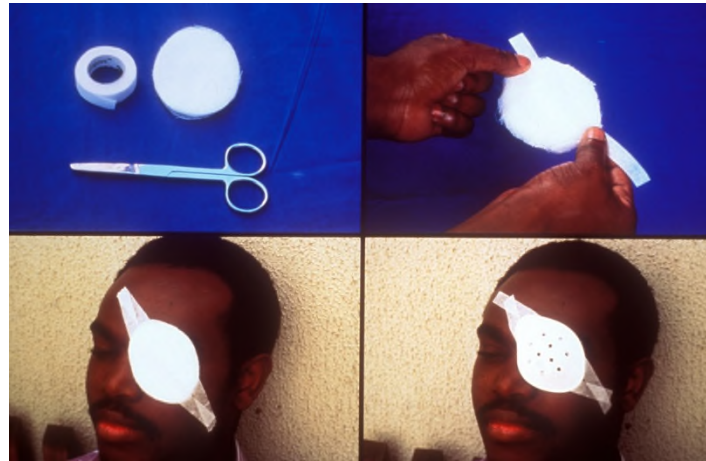
### **DO NOT:**

"Mamaw and Rob" by tonguetied is licensed under CC

- Rub or press on your eye
- Exercise, do strenuous activity, or pick up heavy objects until your doctor says that it's safe
- Get water, soap, or shampoo into your eye
- Bend over beyond your waist until your doctor says that it's safe
- Swim until your doctor says that it's safe
- Wear eye makeup until your doctor says that it's safe

## **TIPS FOR APPLYING THE EYE**

# SHIELD



(Stevens, 2010)

1. Wash your hands before touching your supplies. This helps keep everything clean and free of germs.
2. Lay out all of the needed supplies on a clean surface, like a clean towel, in front of a mirror. It may be helpful to precut 3 or 4 strips of tape that will be used to hold the eye shield in place and stick them where they're easy to reach.
3. It is important to keep the eye closed when putting the shield on.
4. While looking in the mirror, gently place the eye shield over the eye in a position that both covers the eye and feels most comfortable.
5. While holding the shield in position, put the strips of tape over the shield to hold it securely in place. It's OK if you need to use more than 1 or 2 pieces of tape. Try to avoid sticking the tape to places where there is hair so that it doesn't pull when you're taking the tape off.

*Note to Caregiver: You may want to practice the skills and tips that are used to apply an eye shield prior to the surgery, in order to familiarize the individual and caregivers with the materials used, how they will be applied, and touching the eye area. Practicing before the procedure may be helpful in desensitizing someone who is uncomfortable with having their eye area touched, or having something over their eye. It may also be helpful to have the individual wear the eye shield for short periods of time and building up to longer periods, each day before their surgery, according to a schedule that you create, to help build up tolerance for having it in place.*

# LET YOUR DOCTOR KNOW IMMEDIATELY IF YOU HAVE:

- Vision loss
- Pain that persists despite the use of over-the-counter pain medications
- Increased eye redness
- Discharge from the eye
- Eyelid swelling
- Light flashes or multiple new spots (floaters) in front of your eye



"Dr. John Jacobi holding prism in front of a patient during eye exam" by [Suburban Eye Care](#) is licensed under [CC BY 2.0](#)

## AS YOU CONTINUE TO HEAL:

*(Name of individual)*, as your eye continues to heal, your doctor will want to see you again. They may want to do another eye exam. You may still need to wear glasses to help you see clearly, even once your cataracts are removed. If so, you will get new glasses soon.



"Eye exam" by Army Medicine is licensed under CC BY-NC-SA 4.0

When you're at your doctor's appointment, this is a great time to ask the doctor any questions that you may have. It's also a great time to let them know how you've been feeling and what you've been experiencing since your surgery.

# YOU'RE DOING GREAT!

See? It's that simple!  
I know you can do it! You always do a great job!



*Note to Caregiver:* Offer the individual praise and encouragement each time you review this guide or practice the strategies explained in this guide.

## References:

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- NHS. NHS Choices. <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/cataract-surgery/recovery/>.
- Stevens, S. (2010, December). How to apply an eye pad, shield, and bandage. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3033618/>.

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For additional information regarding this guide or any of our physical or behavioral health trainings, contact:

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