



Intraocular Lenses for Children

For years, children who have undergone cataract surgery to correct congenital cataract have been fitted with eyeglasses or contact lenses to correct their vision after surgery. These methods have worked well, but their success relies on parents making sure that their children wear their eyeglasses and contact lenses on a regular basis as prescribed. This is essential to preventing additional eye problems like amblyopia, which can cause poor vision and vision loss.

Today, there is another option to correct children's vision after cataract surgery. The use of **intraocular lenses (IOLs)** has become more common in children in recent years and has a distinct advantage over other forms of vision correction: IOLs provide continuous vision correction, preventing the vision problems that can develop if a child does not wear the prescribed glasses and lenses.

The use of IOLs in children is still somewhat controversial, especially in children under 1 or 2 years of age. There is little data available to evaluate the long-term safety of IOLs implanted at a young age. Children can have an especially increased inflammatory response to the implants, which can often be controlled with steroid medications. However, in some cases, a fibrous membrane can develop, which will require further surgery to remove. Unlike glasses or contact lenses, the IOL prescription cannot be changed without surgery to replace the implants. This makes choosing the correct prescription especially important, which can be difficult in young children. In addition, a child's eye may not be able to accommodate an IOL designed for an adult, so fit can be a problem. Finally, because IOLs do not correct astigmatism, and because the child's eye will grow, which changes the refractive error (prescription), children with IOLs often need to wear eyeglasses in order to achieve good vision.

If your child requires cataract surgery, discuss all the options with your ophthalmologist (Eye M.D.) in order to make the best decision for your child.