



Seattle Eye M.D.s

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Extracapsular Cataract Extraction (ECCE)

Extracapsular cataract extraction is a method for surgically removing a cataract, which is a clouding of the eye's naturally clear lens. A cloudy lens interferes with light passing through to the retina, the light-sensing layer of cells at the back of the eye. Having a cataract can be compared to looking at the world through a foggy window.

In extracapsular extraction, an incision is made in the side of the cornea at the point where the cornea and sclera, the white part of the eye, meet. Carefully entering the eye through the incision, the surgeon gently opens the front of the lens capsule and removes the hard center, or nucleus, of the lens. The soft lens cortex is then suctioned out leaving the back of the capsule in place.

An incision requiring sutures is necessary because the lens is removed in one piece. A plastic implant called an intraocular lens, or IOL, is substituted for the original lens. The implanted IOL allows light to be focused on the retina.

It may be up to six weeks before the sutures are removed and best-corrected vision is achieved. During recovery, it may be necessary to avoid bending over or lifting heavy objects.