

Cataracts



What does this mean?

- Congenital cataracts is when there is a lack of transparency in the lens and which is present at birth. The cataract can affect one eye, when it is called 'unilateral' or both eyes, when it is called 'bilateral'.
- Cataracts can be an inherited condition but can also be idiopathic, that is when there is no known cause.
- CYP with a Cataract is when the normally clear lens of the eye becomes hazy. If the lens is not clear, then not all the light can get into the eye and vision is often blurred. Most children with cataract in only one eye usually have good vision in the other and do not normally complain of reduced vision. When both eyes are affected the child is much more likely to have blurred vision.

Implications

- A clear visual image is crucial in the early years to allow the connections from the eye to the brain to develop and to allow progressive development of the visual system.
- Cataracts can cause hazy or blurred vision and 'washed out' colours, good contrast is therefore important.
- Cataracts can also cause light to be scattered causing glare for the child.
- Cataracts are removed as early as possible; the absence of lenses means the child will have contact lenses/glasses/bifocal glasses/ tinted glasses depending on their visual needs. In some cases, the lens is replaced by a lens placed inside the eye – intraocular lens.
- If the cataract is unilateral and left untreated this can result in amblyopia. This means blurred vision remains as the brain is not used to receiving a clear image.
- A baby/child has many visits to the eye clinic for ongoing assessment and treatment.
- It is really important to be aware that if the child has a severe headache, they should visit their eye clinic as soon as possible as this may indicate glaucoma (higher pressure of the fluid within the eye) which would damage the optic nerve if left untreated.

Ways to Help

- Visual materials should have good contrast – increase the contrast – i.e bold black on white or yellow background
- Text should be appropriate to the child's individual vision acuity.
- Visual materials should be uncluttered and have less detail
- Sentences and paragraphs should be well spaced
- Move pupil closer to the front of the group or use of technology to view the interactive smartboards may be required.
- On the whiteboard use – larger black and blue text
- Reduce the amount of text to be copied or provide an individual printed copy on the child's desk.
- Encourage children to consistently wear their glasses and to keep them clean.

Other Resources:

www.berkshiresensoryconsortium.co.uk
www.childhoodcataracts.org.uk

Related Topics:

- amblyopia
- glaucoma