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Medical tests before eye surgery

When you need them—and when you don't

If you're going to have cataract surgery or another eye surgery, you may be given some medical tests first. For example, you may have an electrocardiogram (EKG) to check your heart, or a complete blood count (CBC) to check for anemia, a low amount of red blood cells.

These tests may make surgery safer. For example, they may find medical problems that lead to a delay or change in your surgery. But most people don't need these tests before eye surgery. Here's why:

The tests usually aren't helpful for low-risk surgery.

Generally, cataract and other eye surgeries have very low risks of complications or problems, such as heart attacks. There really isn't anything doctors can do to lower the risk any further. Eye surgeries do not take long, and they use only a local anesthetic to numb the eye, often with a medicine to relax you.

Even so, many healthy people get a routine set of tests before eye surgery. In these cases, the tests don't change the surgery or make it safer.



They can lead to more tests.

The tests themselves are very safe, but they can cause false alarms. This can lead to anxiety and more tests. And they can needlessly delay your surgery. For example, one test may be followed up with a repeat test, an ultrasound, a biopsy, or a test that exposes you to radiation, such as an X-ray or CT scan.

The costs can add up.

Your health plan may not pay for the tests if you do not have a specific medical need for them. If this happens, you may need to pay for them. It could cost between \$25 and \$50 per test, according to HealthcareBlueBook.com.

So when are the tests needed?

You may need the tests if you have certain kinds of health conditions or illnesses. For example, you may need an EKG if you have heart disease or symptoms such as chest pain or shortness of breath. If you have diabetes, you will probably need a blood test to make sure it is under control.

Based on the test results, your doctor may need to change your surgery or anaesthesia. You may need special care during or after the surgery. Or you may need to postpone the surgery until the problem is treated or controlled.

Advice from Consumer Reports

How can you protect your vision?

- **Eat right.** Eating certain foods can reduce your risk of eye disease. Try to eat a lot of green leafy vegetables, fish, fruit, and other foods rich in vitamins and minerals.
- **Exercise.** Aim for 30 minutes of aerobic exercise, such as walking, most days of the week. Regular physical activity may help prevent some eye diseases or keep them from getting worse.
- **Lose extra weight.** Obesity increases the risk of cataracts, glaucoma, and other eye diseases.
- **Control blood pressure, blood sugar, and cholesterol levels.** These conditions can damage the blood vessels in the back of your eyes. If you have one of these conditions, work with your doctor to keep it under control.
- **Protect your eyes.** Wear sunglasses and a sun hat for protection from ultra-violet rays. This may help delay cataracts and reduce the risk of other eye diseases. To prevent eye injuries, wear safety glasses when using power tools or playing sports.
- **Don't smoke.** Smoking increases the risk of cataracts and other eye diseases.
- **Get regular eye exams.** If you have diabetes or are 65 or older, you should get regular eye exams to check for diseases and vision loss. You can see either of these kinds of eye doctors:
 - An ophthalmologist (M.D.) is a medical or osteopathic doctor and specializes in medical and surgical eye problems.
 - An optometrist (O.D.) is a doctor trained to diagnose and treat some eye diseases, but is not licensed to perform surgery.



This report is for you to use when talking with your health-care provider. It is not a substitute for medical advice and treatment. Use of this report is at your own risk.

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Regular care helps you protect your vision.