

Information for patients and carers

Keratoplasty and Full Thickness Graft

(Corneal Transplant)

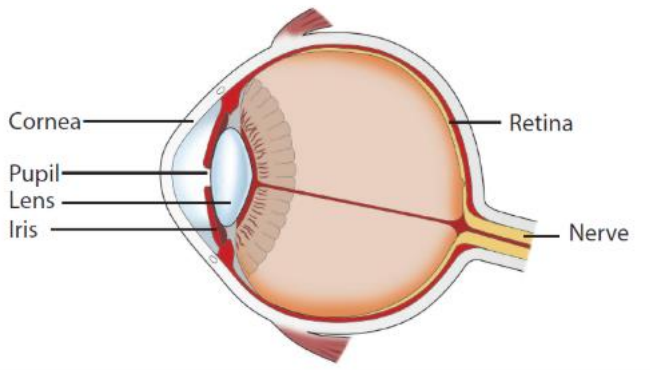
What is a corneal transplant?

A corneal transplant is also known as a corneal graft.

The cornea is the curved window at the front of the eye that must be clear to enable us to see.

It is in the front of the iris (the coloured part of the eye) and the pupil (the round black hole in the centre of the coloured part) (see diagram 1).

Diagram 1 – Cross section view of the eye (side view)



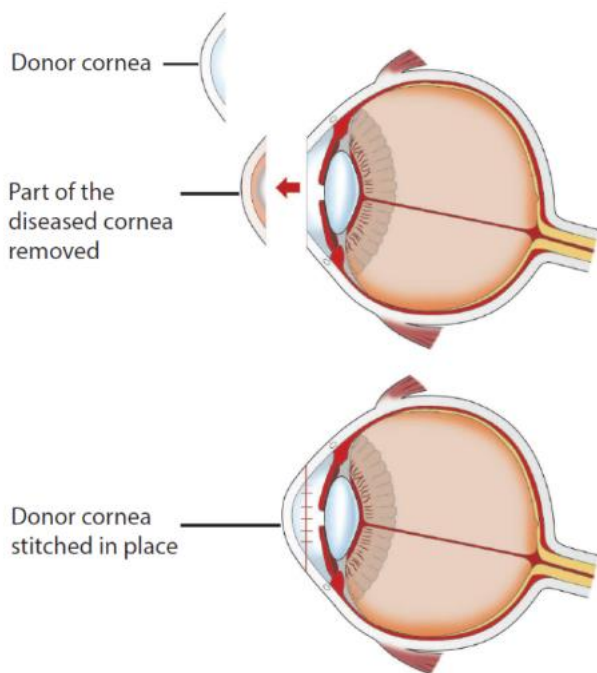
If the cornea is hazy, meaning that you can no longer see through it, a corneal transplant may be appropriate.

The corneal transplant is taken from the eye of a person who has recently died.

What actually takes place during the operation?

A circular portion is removed from the centre of your cornea. A circular portion is then taken from the centre of the donor cornea (this is the corneal transplant) and it is placed into the hole in your cornea and held in place with very fine stitches (diagram 2).

Diagram 2 – Transfer of donor corneal transplant to the recipient



Some patients, depending on the nature of their corneal disease will benefit from a partial thickness corneal transplant. Your corneal surgeon will explain the options to you and guide you in your decision making.

What happens to the part of my cornea that is removed?

Most corneas are examined under a microscope for further information. Some tissue may be kept for research into corneal disease. Eventually the tissue is disposed of by the laboratory staff.

Will I be asleep for the operation?

The operation is done with you asleep (general anaesthetic)

How long does the procedure take?

A routine corneal transplantation usually takes about an hour. This is only a guide, as each patient is different.

How long will I be in hospital?

Usually, you will be in hospital for just the day of the operation. Occasionally it may be necessary to keep patients in for a little longer to allow the eye to settle further. You will also need to stay in if you do not have anyone available at home to stay with you for the first night following your general anaesthetic.

What will my eye feel like after surgery?

Your eye may feel mild irritation, and some mild discomfort is expected: this should settle in a few days. Significant pain is not common, so if your eye is painful, you should contact the hospital.

Will I need eye drops after the operation?

Eye drops will be needed frequently for the first few days; later they are used less frequently but will be needed for many months to prevent the rejection of the donor cornea.

What is the follow up care?

You will usually be seen soon after the operation. We gradually increase the period between visits; this will depend on each individual.

You can expect to be seen at least six times in the first year.

Is there anything I should avoid doing after the operation?

You should plan to take up to around 2 weeks off work. Swimming should be avoided for at least a month, and you should never do contact sports such as rugby or boxing.

Could I catch any infection from the transplant?

The medical history of the donor is checked to exclude the following conditions:

Rabies, Creutzfeldt-Jakob Disease (CJD), and diseases of the nervous system of unknown cause. Blood is taken from all donors to exclude hepatitis B, hepatitis C and HIV. While the cornea is in the Transplant Service Eye Bank it is very carefully examined to reduce the risk of infection. As a result of this, the risk of catching any disease from it is so small it is negotiable.

Once you have had a corneal transplant, you will be unable to be a blood or organ donor.

Will I need glasses after the operation?

In some cases, it is possible to see quite clearly without glasses. However, most people usually require glasses or contact lenses. The best time for getting these will depend on a number of things, including when the stitches in your eye are removed. Your eye surgeon will decide when this will happen, but they should all be removed by the first year after the operation.

How good will my vision be eventually?

This will depend on the health of your eye and the presence of other eye conditions such as cataract or glaucoma, but your vision will not be perfect in the operated eye. The vision in your eye will usually have settled to the best it is going to be after about 12 months.

What problems should I watch out for?

Rejection of the corneal transplant is our main concern. This rejection results from your immune system recognising the transplant as being 'foreign'.

Contact us if you experience any of the following signs with your eye:

- Redness
- Sensitivity to light
- Reduced vision
- Pain

Contact details

If you experience any problems, contact the number below:

Ophthalmology telephone triage service: **01257 245346**

Monday to Friday 9.00am to 4.30pm

If you feel that your eye condition needs an urgent assessment outside of these hours, please attend the nearest Emergency Department.

Sources of further information

www.lancsteachinghospitals.nhs.uk

www.nhs.uk

www.accessable.co.uk

www.patient.co.uk

www.lancsteachinghospitals.nhs.uk/veteran-aware

<https://bepartofresearch.nihr.ac.uk/>

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If you want to stop smoking, you can also contact Smokefree Lancashire on Freephone **08081962638**

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This information can be made available in large print, audio, Braille and in other languages.

Our patient information group review our leaflets regularly, if you feel you would like to feedback on this information or join our reading group please contact on email address:

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