

yourhealth

I HAVE had terrible eyesight ever since childhood. I could barely read the big, top line of the eye chart. I wore contact lenses for 38 years until September 2005, when my ophthalmologist discovered that constant use had damaged my eyes by distorting the cornea.

I had to start wearing glasses, which I hated. I love backpacking in South East Asia and they're such a hassle - you're always worrying about losing them.

In addition, I noticed that I was starting to get blurred vision, which was growing worse. At auctions, I couldn't even tell when the auctioneer was taking my bid. It turned out that cataracts were beginning to grow in both eyes.

It was a shock - I wasn't aware of any history of cataracts in my family and I thought cataracts only affected people over 70. I knew that without treatment I would eventually go blind. It scared me; I had so much more travelling to do and I wanted to see my grandchildren grow up.

I was referred to an ophthalmologist, **Sheraz Daya**, at the **Centre for Sight**, Queen Victoria Hospital, East Grinstead, for an examination and tests. He told me that I was suitable for a new technique called Restor which would allow him to remove my cataracts and correct my vision at the same time.

It sounded so much better than ordinary surgery which would cure the cataracts but still leave me with dreadful sight and the need for reading glasses. Although it was expensive and only available to me privately, I think you can't really put a price on your sight.

THERE were two operations, one on each eye, two weeks apart. I was so nervous the first time that I shook but the procedure was quick and painless - I didn't even need to take the paracetamol I was given afterwards. The lens that's implanted isn't like a contact lens - you can't feel it at all.

The morning after, the dressing was removed and I realised I could read a newspaper article displayed on the clinic wall from my chair. Before the procedure I hadn't even been able to see that the newspaper was there.

I still can't get used to how wonderful it is to wake up and be able to see instantly. My eyesight hasn't been this good since I was 11. I understand that my sight won't change now and that because the lens filters out blue light, it should help to protect me from age-related macular degeneration too.

Having good sight makes a big difference to my job. Now if I turn over a piece of china I can read what's on the bottom and I can actually see the auctioneer. Finding out I had cataracts has improved my quality of life to a great degree.



Built-in bifocals

Antiques dealer Teresa Donald, 57, from Chichester, West Sussex, had a cataract operation that improved her vision over both long and short distances, she tells HILARY FREEMAN

WHAT IS A CATARACT?

IT is a clouding of lens of the eye. The lens is clear tissue, found behind the coloured part of the eye (the iris), which helps it to focus.

As we get older, the lens thickens and becomes stiffer, causing problems. Symptoms include blurred vision, being dazzled by light and having a change in colour vision.

Cataracts are more common in older people - a third of those aged over 65 have them in both eyes. The best treatment is an operation to replace the cloudy lens with a plastic one called an intraocular lens implant. About 200,000 cataract operations are done in the UK every year, most on the NHS.

Restor is a new type of lens which uses similar technology to varifocal spectacle lenses, through which there is a gradual change in prescription to allow the patient to see at both long and short distances.

Sheraz Daya, consultant ophthalmologist at the Centre for Sight, says: "A patient is given anaesthetic drops and then a tiny incision is made in the eye, creating an opening in the

membrane surrounding the cataract/lens. The cataract/lens is then removed using a high frequency ultrasound needle."

"Finally, the Restor lens is implanted through the original incision into the capsule bag of the previous lens. Because only a small incision is involved, no stitches are required."

The technology is not currently available on the NHS and costs around £2,500 per eye. Larry Benjamin, of the Royal College of Ophthalmologists, says: "The lenses aren't available on the NHS because they are very expensive and it would wipe out the budget very quickly. But in carefully selected patients, this is a good lens to use."

• *Centre for Sight: 0800 011 2887; www.centreforsight.com*

