



Astigmatic Keratotomy with Cataract Surgery

Astigmatism is an optical imperfection of the eye which most of us have in some degree, due to a non-spherical curvature of the cornea, the front window of the eye. It is not a serious problem and normally spectacles are used to clarify the image in patients with significant astigmatism. Astigmatism normally does not change too much through life but can be increased with any operation on the front of the eye such as cataract surgery.

During the course of your cataract surgery, a procedure known as astigmatic keratotomy could be used to correct pre-existing astigmatism as well as to limit the amount of astigmatism produced by the cataract surgery itself. This involves the placement of one or two small, very fine incisions in the cornea. These incisions do not extend through the cornea and are made with diamond blades to make them extremely fine and rapidly healing. Sometimes these will be placed adjacent to the full thickness corneal incision, which must be made for your cataract surgery. Sometimes they will be placed in separate locations. At no time, however, are they placed near the centre of the cornea, which is the only part important for transmission of light.

You can think of the astigmatic keratotomy as being a refinement of the optic results of your cataract surgery.

It is important for you to realize that the cost, which you bear for the use of the private surgical facility and materials, is applied to the performing of this astigmatism surgery. In conformance with provincial government legislation, you are not required to pay anything for the cataract surgery itself, and therefore the provincial government is in no way responsible for the facility costs of this procedure.

Likewise, virtually no private medical insurance companies cover refractive surgical procedure costs (refractive surgical procedures are those such as astigmatic keratotomy whose goal is to reduce dependency on spectacles).

If you have any questions about either the procedure or your payment for the astigmatic keratotomy, please ask one of my staff to explain this fully to you.

Lawrence Brierley, MD