

# Choosing Wisely®

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## Medical tests before eye surgery

### When you need them—and when you don't

If you're going to have eye surgery, such as to remove cataracts, you may be given some medical tests first. For example, you may have an electrocardiogram (EKG) to check the health of your heart, or a complete blood count (CBC) to check that you have a healthy number 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.**

Cataract removal and other eye surgeries usually have very low risks of complications, such as heart attacks. Doctors can't do very much to lower the risk any further. Eye surgeries do not take long. Eye surgery is usually done with only a local anesthetic to numb the eye. Often you are also given a medicine to relax you.



Even though eye surgery is very low risk, many healthy people get a routine set of tests before their 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 be asked to pay for them.

### **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 anesthesia. 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.

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

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