



Your Vision With Cataracts

A cataract is a clouding of the lens of the eye that can impair vision. More than half of all Americans age 65 and older have cataracts.

Cataracts occur when there is a buildup of protein in the lens that makes it cloudy. This prevents light from passing clearly through the lens, causing some loss of vision. Since new lens cells form on the outside of the lens, all the older cells are compacted into the center of the lens resulting in the cataract.

Cataracts usually form slowly and cause few symptoms until they noticeably block light. Symptoms may include:

- Vision that is cloudy, blurry, foggy, or filmy.
- Progressive nearsightedness in older people often called "second sight" because they may no longer need glasses.
- Changes in the way you see color because the discolored lens acts as a filter.
- Problems driving at night such as glare from oncoming headlights.
- Problems with glare during the day.
- Double vision.
- Sudden changes in glasses prescription.

To diagnose cataracts, an eye exam will be given to test how well you can see. You should bring your glasses or wear your contacts to the appointment. Your doctor will also dilate your pupil in order to examine the condition of the lens and other parts of the eye.

If your vision loss cannot be corrected with new glasses or contacts and cataracts interfere with your daily life, you may be a candidate for cataract surgery, which involves removing the clouded lens and replacing it with a clear, artificial one.

Cataract surgery is usually conducted on an outpatient basis and is very successful in restoring vision. It is the most frequently performed surgery in the U.S., with more than 1.5 million cataract surgeries done each year. Nine out of 10 people who have cataract surgery have improvement in vision.

Because the exact cause of cataracts is uncertain, there is no proven method of preventing them. Because cataracts and other conditions such as glaucoma are common in older adults, it's important to have your eyes examined on a regular basis. According to the American Academy of Ophthalmology, people aged 40 to 64 should have a comprehensive eye exam every two to four years; people 65 and older should have a comprehensive eye exam every one to two years. People with a history of eye problems or other medical conditions that increase the risk of eye disease should have eye exams more frequently.

**If you would like more information, please contact
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