

Cataracts



Is this your vision?
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Eye Care For You

Over 50% of people over the age of 60, and quite a few who are even younger than that, suffer from cataracts. With the formation of a cataract, activities like reading, gardening, golfing or driving can be difficult. Cataract sufferers may also be troubled by a bothersome glare, halos around lights, or even monocular double vision. As the cataract becomes worse eyeglass prescriptions may become necessary more frequently even though the prescriptions could have been stable for several years.

What are cataracts?

A cataract is the clouding or discoloration of the lens inside the eye. The clear passage of light through the eye to the retina is blocked by this change. Consequently, the image sent to the brain is dull and blurred. Although they can occur in young people, most cataracts are a normal part of aging. As we mature, gradual changes occur to the focusing lens inside the eye. Prior to young adulthood the lens is soft, flexible and clear. At about age 45 the lens begins to harden, change color and turn cloudy, usually resulting in the need for reading glasses or bifocals. As we continue to mature the lens continues to change. Blurring and glare can get worse, until stronger glasses no longer help and cataract surgery is required to provide clear vision again.

Symptoms of cataracts.

- Blurred or distorted vision
- Halos or glare around bright lights.
- Loss of color perception (especially blues)
- Loss of depth perception
- Night blindness
- Eye fatigue and headaches
- Double vision in one or both eyes when the second eye is occluded.

How can a cataract be treated?

Up to a point, stronger eyeglass prescriptions can adjust for vision changes due to cataracts. Eventually the only effective treatment of a cataract is the surgical removal of the clouded lens.

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The lens cannot be cleared by eye drops, medication, eye exercises or laser treatment. Modern cataract surgery is one of the most successful operations performed around the world. Cataract surgery is also the most common eye surgical procedure done in the world today.

Cataract Surgery

Your cataract will be removed with an advanced technique called phacoemulsification, or small incision cataract surgery. After applying a local anesthetic, a "stair-stepped" incision of about 3-4 mm is made in the front part of the eye. The cataract is then broken into microscopic particles using high energy sound waves and gently suctioned from the eye. Then, to compensate for the removal of the eye's natural lens, an intra-ocular lens (IOL) is implanted into the eye. After using this special "stair-stepped" incision, you may receive one, several or even no stitches. This type of incision is mostly self-sealing, stronger, heals faster and remains tightly sealed by the natural outward pressure within your eye.

Successful cataract surgery.

Everyone heals somewhat differently, but many cataract patients report improvement in their vision almost immediately after the procedure. Most patients return to their normal work and lifestyle within a day or two or even a week. Many patients experience vision that is actually better than before they developed cataracts. Once the cataract is removed, however some patients may experience clouding again of a thin tissue called a capsule or "bag" that holds the IOL. In most cases a laser is used to painlessly open the clouded capsule and restore clear vision again.

Advantages of Intra-ocular Lenses

- Elimination of contact lenses or thick cataract glasses.
- Requires no care after the immediate postoperative care
- No restrictions on activities after recovery from the surgery
- More normal appearance after surgery
- Improved depth perception and ability to judge distances
- No interference with side vision.

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