

# Cataracts

**What Are Cataracts?** A cataract is a cloudy area in the lens of the eye. There are three classifications of adult cataracts: immature, mature, and hypermature. A cataract is considered immature when there are some remaining clear areas in the lens. A mature cataract is completely opaque. A hypermature cataract has a leaky liquid surface that may cause inflammation of other eye structures.

**What Causes Cataracts?** Cataracts usually develop with advancing age, although in rare cases, they can be congenital (present at birth). Adult cataracts may run in families. The condition can also be caused by medical problems such as diabetes, injury to the eye, medications (especially steroids), overexposure to sunlight, previous eye surgery, and other unknown factors. Congenital cataracts can be the result of genetic inheritance or can be caused by infections and disorders that can occur during pregnancy.



Normal sight



A cataract may cause hazy or blurred vision

## **What are the Symptoms of Cataracts?**

- Blurred Vision
- Loss of Color Intensity
- Poor Night Vision
- Double Vision in One Eye
- Frequent Change in Eyeglass Prescription
- Problems with Glare or Light Sensitivity
- Seeing Halos Around Lights

**How are Cataracts Detected?** An examination conducted by an ophthalmologist can detect the presence of a cataract.

**Who is Most at Risk?** Most people experience some lens clouding after the age of 60. About 50% of people aged 65-74 and about 70% of people over 75 have visually significant cataracts.

**How are Cataracts Treated?** Many people with cataracts are able to attain adequate vision with glasses; however, cataracts can only be removed surgically. The surgery is recommended when a person cannot see well enough with glasses to perform normal activities. Cataract surgery is typically performed as an outpatient procedure under local or topical anesthesia. The natural lens is usually removed and replaced with a permanent intraocular lens implant. Over 1.4 million people have cataract surgery each year in the United States, and over 95% of those surgeries are performed without complications.

**How can Cataracts Be Prevented?** Protecting your eyes from the sun's radiation with UV-filtering sunglasses may help slow the progression of cataracts. Controlling other eye diseases and quitting smoking if you are a smoker will also decrease your risk.

*This document is provided for informational purposes only. Please consult an eye care professional about symptoms that may require medical attention and may or may not be covered by your medical plan and/or routine vision plan.*