

CATARACTS

A cataract is a opacification or clouding that develops in the normally clear lens of the eye. This prevents the lens from properly focusing light on the retina at the back of the eye, resulting in a loss of vision. A cataract is not a film that grows over the surface of the eye.

How are Cataracts treated?

If your cataract develops to a point that daily activities are affected, you will be referred to an eye surgeon who may recommend the surgical removal of the cataract. Most commonly, an intraocular lens (IOL) implant is inserted in your eye at the time of surgery to replace your clouded lens. In some cases, however, eyeglasses or contact lenses may also be needed to provide the most effective post-cataract vision.

Who gets Cataracts?

Cataracts are most often found in persons over the age of 55, but they are also occasionally found in younger people, including newborns. While a comprehensive eye examination by an eye care professional can determine for certain if you have a cataract forming, there are a number of signs and symptoms which may indicate a cataract. Among them are:

- Blurred or hazy vision where colors may seem yellowed
- The appearance of dark spots or shadows that seem to move when the eye moves
- A tendency to become more nearsighted because of increasing density of the lens
- Double vision
- A gradual loss of color vision
- A stage where it is easier to see without glasses
- The feeling of having a film over the eyes
- An increased sensitivity to glare, especially at night

What causes Cataracts?

It is known that a chemical change within the eye causes the lens to become cloudy. The change may be due to advancing age or it may be the result of heredity, an injury or disease.

Excessive exposures to ultraviolet or infrared radiation present in sunlight or from furnaces, cigarette smoking and/or the use of certain medications are also cataract risk factors. Cataracts usually develop in both eyes, often at different rates.

Can Cataracts be prevented?

Currently, there is no proven method to prevent cataracts from forming. However, some measures, such as wearing sunglasses to protect your eyes from ultraviolet rays, can be taken to lessen the risk. Ask your eye care professional for additional recommendations.

When will I need to have Cataracts removed?

Cataracts may develop slowly over many years, or they may form rapidly in a matter of months. Some cataracts never progress to the point that they need to be removed. Usually, you will be ready to have the cataract removed when it is having a significantly adverse effect on your lifestyle. Your eye care practitioner will arrange a consultation with a surgeon, who will decide on the appropriate time for removal. Most people wait until the cataracts interfere with daily activities before having them removed.