

Cataracts can be treated



The eye has a clear lens inside that allows you to focus on things. But, as we get older, the lens may not be clear anymore. Proteins inside the lens stick together, causing a cloudy spot. This is a cataract.

Cataracts are common. More than half of people age 80 and over have cataracts or had cataract surgery.

WHAT CAUSES CATARACTS?

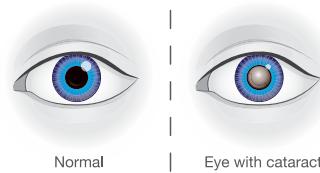
Cataracts cannot always be prevented. Many people get them simply from getting older. This is because proteins in the eye's lens start to break down with time.

But there are some things you can do to reduce your risk of getting cataracts:

- Get regular eye exams.
- Don't smoke – or quit if you do smoke.
- Limit or avoid alcohol.
- Protect your eyes with proper sunglasses and hats that shield the sun.
- Eat a healthy diet and get exercise. This can help prevent diabetes and high blood pressure, which may cause cataracts.

DO I HAVE CATARACTS?

Many people don't realize they have cataracts. This is because changes in vision happen very slowly over time.



People who have cataracts may notice:

- Colors look faded or yellowed; things look blurry or cloudy
- Seeing a "halo" around lights
- It's harder to read without a very bright light
- Trouble with night vision
- Double vision in one eye

WHAT CAN I DO ABOUT CATARACTS?

While cataracts may take away your clear vision, there is good news. Many cataracts can be corrected with surgery.



The operation usually takes less than an hour. The doctor will replace the cloudy lens with a clear artificial lens. Usually, no stitches are needed. You may also have the surgery without general anesthesia, or being put to sleep. The doctor will numb the eye area so you won't feel anything.

People usually have only minor pain afterward. You may need to use eye drops after surgery to help the eye heal, or wear a protective eye shield when you sleep. Your doctor can let you know when it is safe for you to drive and do other activities.

In most cases, the eye is totally healed within a few weeks and vision is much better.

Sources: American Academy of Ophthalmology, National Eye Institute