



Cataract

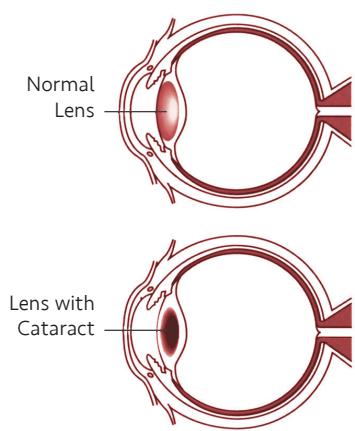
Cataract is a cloudy area in the lens or lens capsule of the eye. It blocks or distorts light entering the eye. Vision gradually becomes dull and fuzzy, even in daylight. If cataracts form in both eyes, one eye can be worse than the other, because each cataract develops at a different rate.



Vision with Cataracts



Side View of the Eye



SIGNS & SYMPTOMS

- Cloudy, fuzzy, foggy, or filmy vision.
- Pupils (normally black) appear milky white.
- Frequent changes in eyeglass prescriptions. Better near vision for a while, but only in far-sighted people.
- Sensitivity to light and glazed nighttime vision. This can cause problems when driving at night.
- Blurred or double vision. Changes in the way you see colors.
- Seeing glare from lamps or the sun. Halos may appear around lights.

CAUSES

- The most common form of cataracts come with aging due to changes in the chemical state of lens proteins. More than half of Americans have a cataract by age 80.
- Cataracts can also result from damage to the lens capsule due to trauma; from the sun's ultraviolet rays; from radiation treatment for cancer; from taking corticosteroid medicines for a long time; and from chemical toxins. Smokers have an increased risk for cataracts. So do persons with diabetes and glaucoma.

TREATMENT

Treatment includes corrective lenses, cataract glasses, and cataract surgery, when needed.

A person who has cataract surgery usually gets an artificial lens at the same time. Often, a plastic disc called an intraocular lens (IOL) is placed in the lens capsule inside the eye.

It takes a couple of months for an eye to heal after cataract surgery. Experts say it is best to wait until your first eye heals before you have surgery on the second eye if it, too, has a cataract.



TRIAGE QUESTIONS



Do you have any of the signs and symptoms of cataracts?

NO
▼

YES ➡ SEE DOCTOR



USE SELF-CARE



SELF-CARE / PREVENTION

There are no proven ways to prevent cataracts. General strategies to promote healthy eyes include the following:

- Limit exposing your eyes to X-rays, microwaves, and infrared radiation.
- Avoid prolonged exposure of the eyes to sunlight. While outdoors, wear polarized sunglasses with UV block and wear a hat with a wide brim.
- Don't smoke. Avoid heavy drinking.

- Keep other illnesses, such as diabetes, under control.
- Wear glasses or goggles that protect your eyes whenever you use strong chemicals, power tools, or other instruments that could result in eye injury.
- Eat foods high in beta-carotene and/or vitamin C, which may help to prevent or delay cataracts. Examples are carrots, cantaloupes, oranges, and broccoli.
- Wear your prescribed glasses.
- Schedule eye exams as advised by your doctor.
- Let someone else drive at night if you can't see well. Night vision can be one of the first things affected by cataracts.
- Wear polarized sunglasses to block the sun's UV rays.
- Add brighter light bulbs to your lamps to help you see better when reading.
- Read large print items. Use magnifying glasses, if needed.

While recovering from cataract surgery:

- Avoid strenuous activity and bending over.
- Wear wraparound sunglasses to protect your eyes from injury or exposure to dust and help with sensitivity to light.
- Wear an eye shield while you sleep.
- Avoid exposure to water and shower carefully.