

## WHAT IS A CATARACT ?

A cataract is a painless, cloudy area in the lens of the eye that blocks the passage of light to the retina (the nerve layer at the back of the eye) usually causing vision problems.

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A cataract occurs when the lens of the eye becomes cloudy. Aging and exposure to sunlight can cause cataracts. Changes in the lens of the eye are often a normal part of the aging process and are common in older people, but they do not necessarily lead to cataracts.

Cataracts can also occur after an eye injury, as a result of eye disease, after the use of certain medications or as a result of medical conditions such as diabetes.

## WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS OF CATARACTS ?

Not all cataracts affect vision. However, cataracts can cause cloudy, fuzzy or foggy vision and glare from a lamp or the sun. Driving at night may be difficult because of severe glare produced by headlights. You may need frequent changes to your eyeglass prescriptions and you may experience double vision in one eye or second sight a temporary improvement in near vision in farsighted people.

## HOW ARE CATARACTS TREATED ?

Surgery is the only effective means of treating vision loss caused by cataracts. Whether or not you need to have cataract surgery depends on the degree to which the cataract interferes with your daily activities. Surgery is almost always by choice (elective) and can be scheduled when it is convenient.

## SURGERY

Surgery for a cataract involves removing the natural lens of the eye that contains the cataract. The lens can be replaced with an artificial lens called an intraocular lens implant (IOL). Before surgery, review with your doctor the advantages and disadvantages of each type of replacement lens.

**Phacoemulsification is the current and accepted technique for cataract surgery and Phacoemulsification is done in preference to older methods in centres with modern facilities.**

In Phacoemulsification a very small incision (<3mm) is made into the clear part of the eye (cornea) and the hard core (nucleus) of the lens is converted in to a soft pulp using high frequency sound waves (NOT Laser) and sucked out. Then a foldable lens (IOL) is injected through the small incision and positioned into the capsule.

The main advantages of this operation are early rehabilitation and decreased occurrence of astigmatism (cylindrical power in glasses). Foldable lenses are preferred to non-foldable lenses as the latter needs enlarging of the incision and thereby sacrificing the advantage of the small incision

## WHAT HAPPENS AFTER SURGERY ?

Most people who have cataract surgery can go home on the same day. It is normal to experience itching, sticky eyelids, and mild discomfort for a while after cataract surgery. Some watery discharge is also common.

Mild pain, irritation, redness and watering is a common occurrence after cataract surgery but subsides in a few days. Problems after Surgery are uncommon, but they can rarely occur. These can include infection (in severe cases a vision threatening endophthalmitis), bleeding, high pressure inside the eye (glaucoma), inflammation (pain redness, swelling), haziness of the cornea and detachment of the retina.

**In the event of unusual pain, loss of vision, or flashing lights you should report to your doctor immediately.**