



Cataracts

A cataract is a clouding of the normally transparent lens of the eye, which may cause blurred or hazy vision. Cataracts form as part of the natural aging process. However, other factors such as heredity, eye disorders, eye injuries, diabetes, glaucoma, macular degeneration (aging of the retina) and even some medications can contribute to the development of cataracts.

As the cloudiness thickens, it prevents light rays from passing through the lens and focusing on the retina (the light sensitive tissue lining the back of the eye). Early lens changes or opacities may not disturb vision. But, as the lens continues to change, you may find that poor vision is interfering with many of your simple daily activities.

What are the Symptoms of a Cataract?

Several specific symptoms include:

- Sensitivity to light and glare
- Problems with driving, especially at night
- Increased near sightedness, requiring frequent changes in your eye glass prescription
- Distortion or ghost images in either eye.

How Can a Cataract be Treated?

The cataract may need no treatment at all if the vision is a little blurry. A change in eye glass prescription may improve vision for a while. There are no medicines, eye drops, exercises or glasses that will cause the cataract to disappear once it is formed. Surgery is the only way to remove a cataract. The advances in modern medicine and improvements in microsurgical techniques have made the treatment of cataracts a highly successful procedure. Cataracts cannot be removed with a laser, only through a surgical incision.

Will Cataract Surgery Improve my Vision?

Over 97% of cataract surgeries improve vision but a small number of patients may have problems. For example, pre-existing conditions such as macular degeneration, glaucoma and diabetes can damage the vision and improvement after surgery may be limited. Even with these conditions, cataract surgery may still be worthwhile as even a moderate improvement in sight can give patients significant improvement in quality of life. It is important to discuss your concerns with the doctor at the time of your visit.

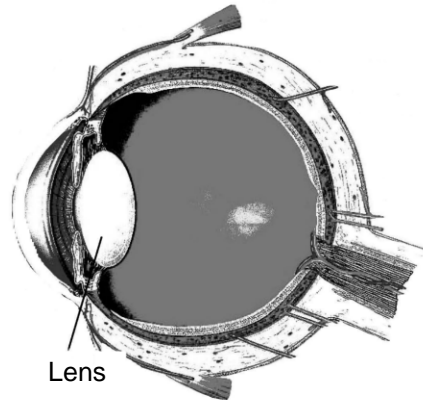
What does the Surgery Involve?

In cataract surgery, the cloudy lens is removed from the eye. In most cases the focusing power of the natural lens is restored by replacing it with a permanent intra-ocular lens implant (IOL). Since it remains in the same position as your natural

lens (behind the iris which is the coloured part inside the eye), it allows for the most natural vision possible after cataract removal.

Will I Need to Stay in Hospital?

Surgery is usually done as a day only admission. Local anaesthesia is used. You will have to return the following day for your first post-operative visit. You will be given instructions regarding eye drops, caring for your eye and advice re returning to normal activities and driving at this time. It is important to attend your follow up appointments.



Remember

Losing sight during ageing can be prevented. Frequent eye examinations, and early detection and treatment of ocular diseases can give excellent sight well into the final years of our lives.

Acknowledgements

This information was prepared by staff of Sydney Hospital and Eye Hospital in conjunction with Multicultural Communication.

If you need help making phone calls in English, ring the Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS) on 131 450.

You can find more health information in your language on the Multicultural Communication website at <http://mhcs.health.nsw.gov.au>

Telephone numbers are correct at time of publication but are not continually updated. You may need to check the numbers in the telephone directory.