

Cataracts

<https://my.clevelandclinic.org/health/diseases/8589-cataracts#symptoms-and-causes>

Cataracts are the clouding of the lens of your eye, which is normally clear. Most cataracts develop slowly over time. Cataracts are a common part of the eye's aging process. Eventually, they can cause the following symptoms:

Vision that's cloudy, blurry, foggy or filmy.

Sensitivity to bright sunlight, lamps or headlights.

Glare (seeing a halo around lights), especially when you drive at night with oncoming headlights.

Prescription changes in glasses, including sudden nearsightedness.

Double vision.

Need for brighter light to read.

Difficulty seeing at night (poor night vision).

Changes in the way you see color

Causes of Cataracts

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The lens of your eye is mostly water and proteins. These lingering proteins can make your lens cloudy, so it's hard to see clearly. This is a typical — though unpleasant — part of aging.

Some things can speed up the formation of cataracts, such as:

- Diabetes.
- Steroids, common medications to treat conditions like arthritis and lupus.
- Phenothiazine drugs such as chlorpromazine (Thorazine®), used to treat a variety of conditions such as schizophrenia and bipolar disorder.
- Eye surgery or eye injuries.
- Radiation treatment to your upper body.
- Spending a lot of time in the sun without eye protection, like sunglasses.

Cataract Treatment

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If your cataract symptoms are mild, you might just need a new prescription for glasses or contacts. Cataracts usually worsen over time, though. Eventually, your doctor will likely recommend surgery to remove the cataract.

At what stage should cataracts be removed?

Most people wait until a cataract causes enough vision loss to be a problem, like making it hard to read or drive. Sometimes people need cataract surgery to see and treat other eye conditions, such as age-related changes in the retina (tissue at the back of the eye) or diabetes-related retinopathy.

An ophthalmologist (doctor who specializes in eye health) performs cataract removal surgery.

Cataract Surgery

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There are two types of procedures to remove cataracts:

Phacoemulsification surgery is the most common procedure for cataracts. Your ophthalmologist makes a small opening in the eye to reach the clouded lens and suctions lens fragments from your eye and puts in a new plastic lens.

Extracapsular cataract surgery is the procedure if the phacoemulsification technique isn't a good option for you. (an advanced cataract might be too dense to break apart easily). Your ophthalmologist makes a larger opening in the eye and removes the lens in one piece. Then the surgeon inserts the manufactured lens.

After surgery, it's typical to have a day or two of:

Itching.

Mild discomfort.

Watery eye.

Sensitivity to light.

Blurry vision.

For a few weeks after surgery, you may need to use eye drops.

During those weeks you'll also want to avoid:

Touching your eyes.

Bending over.

Lifting heavy things.

Doing anything that risks injuring your eye.

Your eye should heal within eight weeks. But you can go about your daily activities as soon as a day after the surgery.