



# CATARACTS

## CLOUDING YOUR VISION

When the normally clear lens within your eye becomes cloudy and opaque, it is called a cataract. Cataracts vary from extremely small areas of cloudiness to large opaque areas that cause a noticeable blurring of vision. Cataracts are a function of aging and are most often found in people over the age of 60, although they are occasionally found in younger people, including newborns. If a child is born with a cataract, it is referred to as a congenital cataract.

## CAUSE

Cataracts are the result of aging changes that occur within your eyes that cause the lenses to become cloudy. This may be due to advancing age, may be inherited, or may be the result of an injury or a disease. Other risk factors for the development of cataracts include excessive exposure to UV radiation present in sunlight, cigarette smoke or the use of certain medications. Cataracts usually develop in both eyes, but often at different rates.

## PREVENTION

Currently, there is no proven method to prevent cataracts from forming. But wearing quality, UV blocking sunglasses is of tremendous benefit as they protect your lenses from harmful UV rays that can speed up cataract formation. A diet rich in antioxidants, such as vitamins A, C, E, Zinc, Selenium and Magnesium, can also be beneficial. Not smoking is also a way to prevent age-related cataracts.

## SYMPTOMS

Indications that a cataract may be forming include blurred or hazy vision that cannot be corrected by changing the glasses prescription, or the feeling of having a film over the eyes that does not go away with blinking. A progressive change in distance and/or near vision may also occur, as well as an increased sensitivity to glare, especially at night. Cataracts develop without pain or redness.

## DIAGNOSIS

A comprehensive eye examination by an optometrist can determine if you have a cataract forming.

## TREATMENT

In the early stages of a cataract, where vision is only minimally affected, your optometrist may prescribe new lenses for your glasses to provide you with the sharpest vision possible. Some cataracts never progress to the point that they need to be removed. But if the cataracts do interfere with your daily activities, and glasses cannot improve your vision, your optometrist will refer you to an eye surgeon who may recommend the surgical removal of the cataracts.

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