

Cataract- what is it?

Cataract is when the clear lens inside the eye becomes cloudy. When it becomes cloudy you cannot see well, like looking through a very dirty window.

What causes cataract?

There are many causes but here are the main ones.

- **Aging**- from about 40 years up there are many changes in the body and the eye. For example, in some people, the hair may become gray. In some people the lens of the eye may become cloudy and this reduces vision.
- **Trauma** - injuries to the eye may cause cataract to form.
- **Congenital or developmental** - it is possible to be born with cataract or to develop it as a young child. This may be due to inheritance from the family or from illness in mother or child.
- **Diabetes** ó people with diabetes are likely to develop cataract.
- **Smoking** ó smoking cigarettes causes cataract.

How do you know if someone has a cataract?

The vision gradually decreases, as the cataract gets more and more cloudy. Cataract can occur in one eye or in both eyes. Anyone with decreasing vision should be examined by a doctor or health worker trained to detect cataract.

Sometimes the cloudiness becomes so great that the black part in the center of the eye actually looks white. In these cases the vision is very reduced.

Treatment

The good news is that modern surgery can cure cataract. Nowadays, eye surgeons can remove the cataract and replace the cloudy lens with a small plastic lens. Surgery is done in hospitals with modern techniques. Before surgery a patient is given anesthetic so there is no pain during the operation. The operation takes 15-20 minutes

After operation a patient must rest for a day with a bandage. The bandage is removed after one day, the doctor examines the eye, and

medicines are instilled. After 2-3 days surgery the patient is discharged to go home with medicines. If she has any further problems she may need to stay in hospital a few more days. Before discharge from hospital the patient will be taught how to put in medicine at home and must use the medicine for a few weeks.

After 2-3 weeks the patient should get another examination, either at the hospital or another site with a trained eye care worker. If a patient has severe pain or sudden loss of vision in the eye before the examination he should come right away.

Many patients do not need glasses after surgery, but some like to use glasses for reading or doing close work.

Follow up

It is important to be assessed after surgery. This can be done in the hospital or by a trained eye care professional in the field.



photo from Fred Hollows Foundation

Cataract surgery
restores vision and
improves quality of
life!

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Cataract



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What is it?

What can be done?