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Frequently Asked Questions

WHAT IS A CATARACT?

The lens in the human eye functions much like the lens in a camera. Its primary purpose is to focus light rays onto the retina at the back of the eye that transmits images to the brain. When the normally clear lens becomes cloudy and blocks the passage of light needed for vision, this is a cataract.

Approximately 50% of Americans ages 65 to 74 have cataracts. About 70% of those ages 75 and over have cataracts. Although cataracts usually develop as part of the aging process, they can also result from:

- Eye injuries
- Certain diseases, such as diabetes
- Medications, such as steroids
- Genetic inheritance
- Frequent, unprotected exposure to UV-A and UV-B rays

Currently, there are no medications, eye drops, glasses or exercises that will cause cataracts to disappear. If cataracts don't interfere with your life, you may decide not to do anything about them. However, when cataracts do interfere with daily activities, such as driving, they can be treated surgically. Cataract surgery is the most frequently performed surgical procedure in the United States, with more than 1.5 million people having cataract surgery every year. New advances and techniques promote patient convenience and comfort, making it one of the safest and most effective surgeries available today.

WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS OF A CATARACT?

Some of your symptoms may include:

- Painless cloudy, blurry, or filmy vision
- Sensitivity to light and glare

- Double vision in one eye
- Poor night vision
- Fading or yellowing of colors
- Frequent changes in eyeglass or contact lens prescriptions

These symptoms may be signs of other eye problems.

HOW IS A CATARACT DIAGNOSED?

During a regular eye exam, your eye doctor will test your vision (how sharp your distance and close-up sight is). You will be dilated (eye drops used to enlarge your pupils) to allow the doctor to see inside your eyes. The doctor will use a bright light to see whether your lenses are clear and check for other problems in the back of your eyes.

Other eye tests may also be used to determine whether you have a cataract:

- Glare test
- Contrast sensitivity test
- Potential vision test
- Specular photographic microscopy

HOW IS A CATARACT TREATED?

A change in your eyeglass prescription may be all you need to improve your vision. The way to surgically treat a cataract is to remove all or part of the lens and replace it with an artificial lens. This is a small, foldable lens that is inserted through a small incision requiring one or no stitches. No needles are used to anesthetize the eye; instead numbing drops are used to numb the eye. Most patients have no pain and don't require a patch immediately after surgery. Patients only wear a shield at night for one week so they don't accidentally rub their eyes during sleep.

Most patients have plenty of time to decide about cataract surgery. Talking with your eye doctor about how the cataract affects your vision and lifestyle can help you decide how to proceed. In a small number of cases, the eye doctor might advise some patients that they must have surgery. For example, the eye doctor may need to see or treat an eye problem that is behind the cataract.

With a rapid recovery time, this outpatient procedure allows the patient to return to normal activities in a minimal amount of time. You will need a friend or family

member to drive you home on the day of your procedure. You may need someone to stay with you for at least one day to help you follow your doctor's postoperative instructions. Your eye doctor will check your progress and make sure your eye recovers fully.

CAN A CATARACT RETURN?

No, however, at the time of surgery, the eye doctor will leave a protective membrane between the lens implant and the back of the eye. In some cases, this membrane may become cloudy after several months or years. If this happens in your particular case, we will open the capsule with a 5-minute laser procedure using the YAG laser. The eye doctor uses a laser (light) beam to make a tiny hole in the capsule to let light pass. This procedure is painless and can be performed in the office.

IS CATARACT SURGERY RIGHT FOR ME?

Most of our patients recover from cataract surgery with no problems and achieve improved vision. This type of surgery has a success rate of 98% in patients with otherwise healthy eyes. However, it is important to understand that no surgery is risk-free. Although serious complications are not common, these may include prolonged irritation, blood collection in the eye, glaucoma, infections, and in extremely rare cases, even total loss of vision. Please be assured that we take every precaution before, during and after your cataract surgery.

CAN I HAVE BOTH EYES DONE ON THE SAME DAY?

If you have a cataract in both eyes, experts agree that it is best to do one eye at a time. In most cases, you can schedule your second eye in a short period of time.

DOES INSURANCE COVER CATARACT SURGERY?

Yes, in most cases and our billing department will be happy to contact your insurance company to verify benefits, complete pre-authorizations and submit claims. Our office will notify you of any special requirements or deductible your insurance company may require. If you do not have insurance and need financial assistance, please let us know so we may help you.

Should you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to give us a call.