

# Hope & Healing

## Cataracts Prevention and Treatment

A heart at peace gives life to the body — Proverbs 14:30

### Introduction

The lens of the eye is normally clear. When a cataract develops the clear lens becomes cloudy, like a frosted window. The word cataract means a waterfall and seeing through a cataract is about like trying to look through a waterfall.

The lens is situated behind the pupil. Normally it focuses light to produce sight that is clear and sharp. When a cataract develops, the light cannot focus through the lens and sight becomes blurred. The blurring of vision caused by a cataract is painless. Cataracts can be small and cover only part of the lens. If vision remains fairly good a small cataract need not be removed.

### Misconceptions About Cataracts

There are many misconceptions about cataracts. For instance, cataracts do not spread from eye to eye. They may, however, develop in both eyes at the same time. A cataract is not a film visible on the outside of the eye. It is not caused by, or made worse by the use of the eye. Cataracts usually develop gradually over years, not in a matter of months. Finally, cataracts have no relationship to cancer, and having a cataract doesn't mean that you will be permanently blind.

### The Causes and Prevention of Cataracts

There are many causes and several types of cataracts. A recent study has linked prolonged sun exposure to the occurrence of cataract in later life. The study showed that a brimmed hat and protective sun glasses that reduced

ultraviolet radiation decreased the chances of developing a cataract. Most cataracts are caused by a change in the chemical composition of the lens. These changes can be caused by:

- Aging
- Eye injuries
- Certain diseases and conditions of the eye and body
- Birth defects

Most cataracts are due to aging. Only 5% of people between the ages of 52 and 62 show some signs of cataracts. In persons age 76 or older, the number rises to 46%. Cataracts due to aging are called senile cataracts. A tendency to develop cataracts at a relatively early age appears to run in some families.

Eye injuries can cause cataracts in people of any age. A hard blow, puncture, cut, intense heat, or chemical burn can damage the lens and cause a condition called traumatic cataract.

Certain infections, drugs, or diseases of the eye such as diabetes can cause the lens to cloud and form a cataract. Studies show that vitamin C might protect against this form of cataract development, but further studies are needed.

### The Symptoms of Cataracts

If a cataract is located on the outer edge of the lens, no change in vision may be noticed. If the cataract is located near the center of the lens, it usually interferes with clear sight.

Common symptoms associated with cataracts include the following:

- Blurred or double vision.
- Sensitivity to light and glare which may make driving difficult.

- Colors are duller.
- Eyeglass prescriptions must be changed frequently.

As the cataract grows worse, stronger glasses no longer improve sight. It may help to hold objects nearer the eye for reading and closeup work. The pupil which is normally black, may become yellow or white.

### Detection and Diagnosis

The ophthalmologist (eye physician) should be visited as soon as possible after you notice blurred vision. With a diagnostic instrument the ophthalmologist can see the cataract. Without this instrument the cataract is not visible except when the pupil becomes yellow or white.

### Treatment

Cataracts are removed when they interfere with your daily activities. Reading or TV watching may become impossible and driving may become difficult because of glare or distortion. The decision to have a cataract removed should be decided between you and the ophthalmologist. Waiting doesn't reduce your chance for a good result, nor does it damage the eye. But, you are not likely to get better without surgery.

The only effective treatment for cataracts is surgery. This is a relatively routine operation that restores vision almost to normal or to normal in 90% of the cases. Most people are enthusiastic about the results. The best results are obtained with an ophthalmologist who performs such surgery frequently.

The removal of a cataract takes only an hour or so, and is usually performed under local anesthesia. Recovery and adjustment usually takes six to eight weeks. If both eyes need surgery, one cataract is removed. Time is given to allow healing. Then, the other is removed.

Cataracts cannot be removed with a laser. But laser surgery is sometimes used to make repairs after the cataract is removed.

## Lens Replacement \_\_\_\_\_

As the natural lens is removed, a substitute lens must be provided to focus the incoming light. This can be done in the following ways:

- **Intraocular lenses.** These are permanently installed at the time of surgery. They are made of clear plastic and cannot be felt by you. They need not be removed or changed.
- **Hard or soft contact lenses.** These are more popular with younger patients who have had cataracts removed. They are worn all day and removed at night.
- **Cataract glasses.** These are thinner and lighter than they used to be, but are still thicker than most ordinary glasses.

If you required corrective eye glasses before the cataract developed, you will also need them afterwards. And, of course, if your eyesight is seriously impaired by another eye disease, cataract surgery may not bring you much relief. Although the intraocular lens is by far the most popular choice, there are advantages and disadvantages to each type of lens replacement. You should discuss with your ophthalmologist which

lens or combination of lenses is best suited to your own lifestyle and eye health.

Cataract surgery is highly successful. Complications during or after surgery can occur. As with any surgery, a good result can't be guaranteed, but your chances of getting a good result are high.

## Cataract Surgery \_\_\_\_\_

Surgery takes about an hour and is performed in a hospital or office as an outpatient.

- Anesthesia may be general or local.
- Drops are applied to widen the pupil and expose the lens.
- An incision is made at the edge of the cornea.
- A gel is injected to keep the space behind the cornea from collapsing.
- The lens is removed.
- The artificial lens is slipped into place and anchored with plastic hooks.
- Antibiotics are given to prevent infection.
- Most discomfort is mild and lasts only a few days.
- The incision heals in about a month.
- Glasses, if they are needed, can be fitted in about 10 weeks.

## Summary \_\_\_\_\_

Loss of sight due to cataracts is the third most common form of legal blindness in the United States today. But, loss of sight due to cataracts is largely preventable. The question of whether cataracts themselves can be prevented is not easily answered. Certainly, the use of sunglasses and other means to prevent eye exposure to bright sunlight should be advised.

## Awaken the Miracles Within You

### The Miracle of God's Hour

God's Hour is the most important event in our day. Maybe you take 30 minutes or maybe you take 10 minutes three times a day or some other variation. No matter, if you really mean business in your spiritual life, you will find some time during the day to devote to God. Many persons find that early morning prayer, spiritual reading and meditation gets them off to a good start.

Do this and you will have discovered the great and practical secrets of:

- Health
- Happiness
- Success
- Prosperity
- Constant spiritual growth

*The recommendations and information in this handout are appropriate in most cases. However, for specific information concerning your personal medical condition, please, consult your doctor.*