

CATARACTS

CATARACTS: FAST FACTS

- You can get a cataract in one or both eyes - but they can't spread from one eye to the other
- The proteins in the natural lens start to break down around age 40, and this is the start of cataract formation
- By age 70 most people have cataracts, or have had cataract surgery
- Cataract surgery is one of the most common surgeries in Australia
- Based on longitudinal data of over 3,000 Adult Changes in Thought (ACT) study participants in USA, researchers have found that subjects who had cataract surgery had nearly 30% lower risk of developing dementia compared with those who did not.

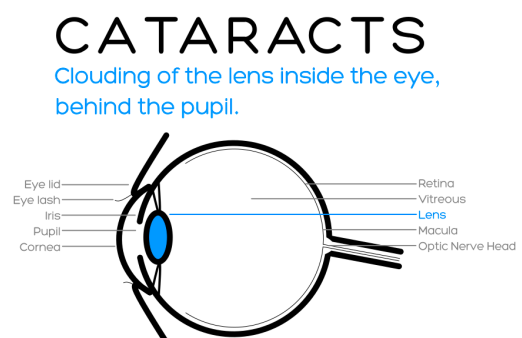
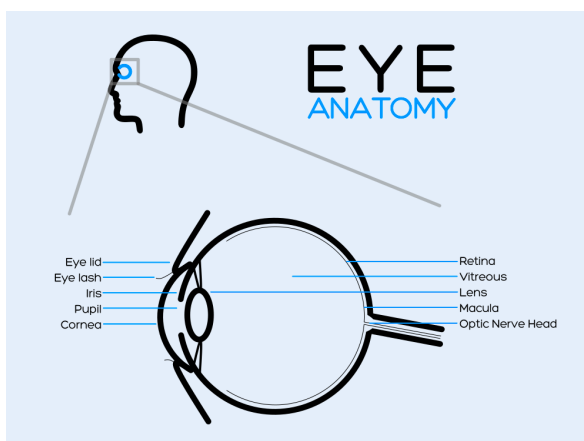
WHAT IS A CATARACT?

A cataract is a clouding of the eye's naturally clear lens. The eye may become frosted or yellowed and vision may become blurred. Cataracts are a common cause of vision loss, especially in ageing patients, but they are treatable.

Normal ageing is the most common cause of cataracts, which is why it often affects both eyes. Symptoms include blurring of vision, light sensitivity/haloes, poor night vision/glare, double vision in one eye, needing a brighter light to read, or altered perception of colours.

Your risk of developing cataracts increases with age. In addition, excessive exposure to Ultra-Violet (UV) light, diabetes, smoking, use of corticosteroid medications, and history of eye surgery may increase the speed of cataracts developing.

You can reduce your chances of developing cataracts by reducing the risk factors mentioned above, such as using eyeglasses with UV protection, avoiding smoking and maintaining a healthy diet (fruits and vegetables). These strategies can slow the onset of cataracts, but they cannot be completely prevented due to their association with age.



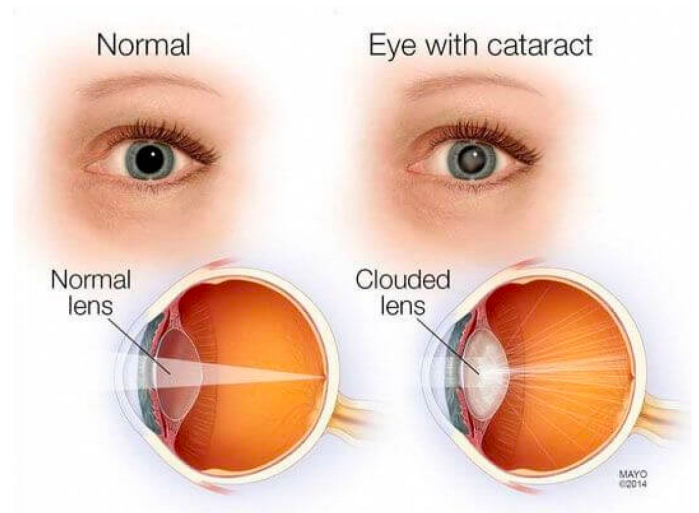
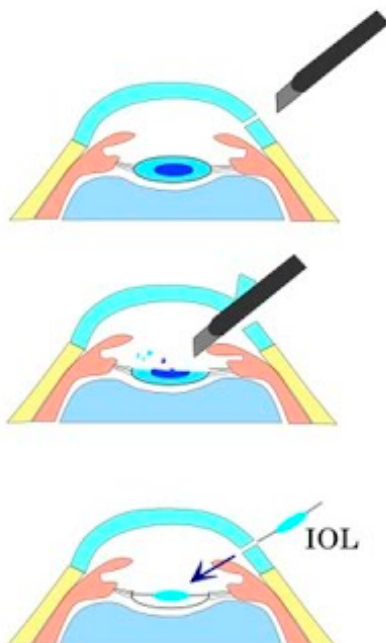
TREATMENT OF CATARACTS

For early stage cataract, changing glasses prescription may improve vision. Brighter lights at home or work may also help. There are no medications or eye-drops that will help. When cataracts are interfering with normal activities of daily living, surgery should be considered.

Terrace Eye Centre surgeons usually remove cataracts as a day procedure, under local anaesthesia in an operating theatre. The surgeon makes a tiny incision in the eye, and the clouded lens is removed through "phacoemulsification," a process that uses ultrasound power to liquefy the lens so it can be withdrawn.

A clear lens implant (Intraocular lens, or "IOL") is then placed in the sac that used to hold the cataract.

There are different kinds of IOLs and you should discuss with your surgeon on the benefits and disadvantages, taking into account your lifestyle and expectations. You may also want to discuss with your surgeon about the other eye.



RISKS OF SURGERY

As with any surgery, cataract surgery poses risks, such as infection and bleeding. After surgery, you must keep your eye clean, wash your hands before touching your eye, and use the prescribed medications to help minimise the risk of infection. Serious infection can result in loss of vision.

Cataract surgery slightly increases your risk of retinal detachment. Other eye disorders, such as high myopia (nearsightedness), can further increase your risk of retinal detachment after cataract surgery. One sign of a retinal detachment is a sudden increase in flashes or floaters. Floaters are little "cobwebs" or specks that seem to float about in your field of vision. If you notice a sudden increase in floaters or flashes, see an eye care professional immediately.

