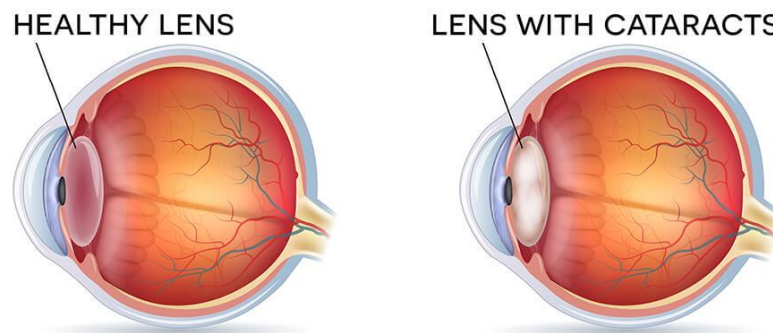


# Cataracts

## WHAT ARE CATARACTS?

Cataracts are a cloudiness that form in the crystalline lenses of the eyes.

When we are born the lenses in our eyes are clear and as we age the eyes naturally gain more lens fibres which causes gradual cloudiness of the lens over time. Poor vision results because the cloudiness interferes with light entering the eye.



## WHAT CAUSES CATARACTS?

Most cataracts are a result of ageing and long-term exposure to ultraviolet light.

Some are caused by injury and certain diseases and in rare cases by exposure to toxic materials and radiation. Occasionally cataracts are present at birth.

## WHAT ARE THE SIGNS OF CATARACTS?

Usually the development of cataracts is gradual with a painless worsening of sight.

Other symptoms include blurred or hazy vision, spots before the eyes, double vision, and an increased sensitivity to glare.

## HOW COMMON ARE CATARACTS?

People older than 65 years often have signs of cataracts and should have their eyes examined regularly.

They become more common with diabetes and with steroid use including steroidal nasal sprays, inhalers, creams, and oral steroids.



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## CAN CATARACTS BE PREVENTED?

There is no proven method of preventing cataracts.

Long-term exposure to ultraviolet light is thought to induce cataracts, so a brimmed hat and approved sunglasses should be worn in sunlight.

## DO CATARACTS GET WORSE?

Yes.

The clouded areas gradually become larger and denser and cause the patients sight to become worse. The time frame for cataract progression can vary from months to many years.

## CAN CATARACTS BE TREATED?

Yes.

Cataract surgery now is a relatively minor procedure.

Depending on the patient, the surgery may be performed on an out-patient basis. This means that the patient attends a hospital or clinic for the surgery and can go home the same day.

The surgery is performed by an Ophthalmologist, a medical doctor who specialises in eye surgery. Your optometrist will refer you to an ophthalmologist if cataract surgery is necessary.

## WHEN SHOULD I HAVE A CATARACT OPERATION?

This varies with each patient.

Usually cataracts surgery is performed when the patient's vision interferes with daily life. Your optometrist may assist you in making this decision.



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