

What are Cataracts?

Cataracts are a common eye disease that develops as a result of aging; although, cataracts can still be found in young children and middle-aged adults. According to [Kellogg Eye Center](#)– the University of Michigan Health, by the age of 65 over 90% of adults have cataracts, and half of those aged 75 to 85 have lost some vision due to cataract complications. According to [Mayo Clinic \(2021\)](#), a cataract is a condition in which the eye's lens becomes cloudy, which makes it difficult to concentrate and see clearly. Vision through a cloudy lens can be compared to trying to see through a foggy window. Cataracts develop slowly and will not cause any disturbance during the development, but they will eventually negatively impact the vision and prevent the performance of usual activities. This disease can greatly impact one's life as it causes difficulty to read, see facial expressions, and lose the ability to drive at night.

Formation of Cataracts:

As previously mentioned, a cataract is a cloudy lens. The cloudiness forms as proteins and fibers in the lens begin to break down. With aging and medical treatments such as chemotherapy and radiation, the eye lenses can become less productive as they begin to lose flexibility, transparency, and thickness. Therefore, the cloudiness in the lens will become denser as it worsens. Cataracts can be developed in both eyes, but may advance at different rates causing drastic vision differences.

Four Types of Cataracts:

1. **Nuclear Sclerotic Cataracts:** The center of the lens is affected and the most common type of cataracts.
2. **Cortical Cataracts:** The edges of the lens are affected.
3. **Posterior Subcapsular Cataracts:** The back of the lens is affected.
4. **Congenital Cataracts:** An infant can be born with congenital cataracts or eventually develop them during childhood.

Symptoms of Cataracts:

Signs and symptoms that indicate cataracts:

- Clouded and blurry vision
- Flashes of light
- Sudden headaches and/or eye pain
- Light sensitivity, the appearance of glares, and halos around lights
- Persistent changes in lens or eyeglasses prescription (Increased nearsightedness)
- Difficulty with vision at night or in darkness
- Need for brighter light when reading to help with concentration
- Colors appear faded/yellowing of colors
- Distortion of vision in a single eye

Factors that may increase the risk of Cataracts include:

- Aging
- Family history of cataracts at a young age

- Excessive exposure to sunlight and UV rays
- Obesity
- High blood pressure
- Smoking
- Substance abuse (Alcohol Use)
- Previous eye injury or inflammation
- Previous eye surgery

Prevent Cataracts:

Changes in glasses/contact lens prescriptions can help with cataract complications. Surgical cataract removal is the most effective treatment. Routine eye exams are necessary to prevent or slow the progression of cataracts. Additionally, reduce alcohol use, quit smoking, and maintain a healthy lifestyle by consuming beneficial nutrients such as fruit and vegetables.

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By: Gissell Salazar

Senior Care Advising Intern at WellPath Partners

Health Science Student at California State University Long Beach