



Cataract Surgery

Is your vision fading?



One of the most common causes of gradual loss of visual acuity is a Cataract.

A cataract is a clouding of the lens of the eye which is otherwise crystal clear. Most cataracts are related to aging, but they can also be caused by injury, and by exposure to ultraviolet (UV) irradiation

Some conditions associated with cataract include Diabetes, prolonged use of oral or topical steroids, and previous surgery on the eye. Cataracts may co-exist with other eye problems including glaucoma and retinal disorders.

The lens is made mostly of water and protein arranged in such a way as to maintain the clarity of the lens and allow light to pass through with minimal interference or distortion.

How a cataract develops

As the eye ages, the protein may coalesce and begin to cloud one or more parts of the lens. Over time, this area may enlarge until it causes blurred vision, difficulty distinguishing colors, and poor night vision.

Your eye doctor classifies cataracts according to their location in the lens. The three main types are nuclear sclerotic (the most common), cortical, and posterior subcapsular (the type associated with steroid use).

The symptoms of early cataract may be improved for a while with new glasses, magnifying lenses, or better lighting when reading. However, as cataracts progress, they may interfere with everyday activities like driving and reading, and require surgery.

Cataract Surgery

Surgery may be the only effective treatment for such cataracts, and it is successful in 95% of patients. Cataract surgery is very safe and is practically painless. It is the most frequently performed procedure in the United States (1.5 million operations annually).

During the procedure, the surgeon removes the natural lens of the eye and, in most cases, replaces it with a clear plastic lens. This obviously requires a high degree of skill, but most cases can be performed under local anesthesia with moderate sedation.

After surgery, the eye surgeon generally prescribes drops to prevent infection and to reduce inflammation and the itching and mild discomfort which sometimes occur. Common sense precautions, like reducing exercise and heavy lifting, are also recommended.

Will you require glasses after surgery?

Sometimes glasses are not required at all after surgery, but when they are, refraction

will not be performed until all the drops and other medications have been discontinued, and the eye has a chance to heal completely.

Recently, the FDA has approved new intraocular lenses that can decrease a patient's dependence on glasses after surgery. Only a comprehensive examination by an ophthalmologist can determine when this is appropriate for a patient.

For more information or to schedule an appointment for an eye examination, you may contact New York Community Hospital for referral to one of our ophthalmologists. The eye surgery suite at New York Community Hospital is specially equipped for cataract surgery, and for many other more complex eye operations.

About the Author



Norman Saffra, MD, FACS, is a board-certified ophthalmologist with special expertise in laser and microsurgery

of the eye. He is an active member of many professional organizations and has a national reputation. He lectures to medical colleges and physician groups and is on the faculty of several New York academic medical centers.

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