

# CATARACTS

A cataract is a clouding or darkening that develops in the normally clear lens of the eye. This prevents the lens from properly focusing light on the retina, at the back of the eye, resulting in a loss of vision. It is not a film that grows over the surface of the eye.

No one is exactly sure what causes a cataract, but it is known that chemical changes within the lens cause it to become cloudy. This is often thought of as a part of the natural aging process, but it may also result from heredity, an injury or disease.

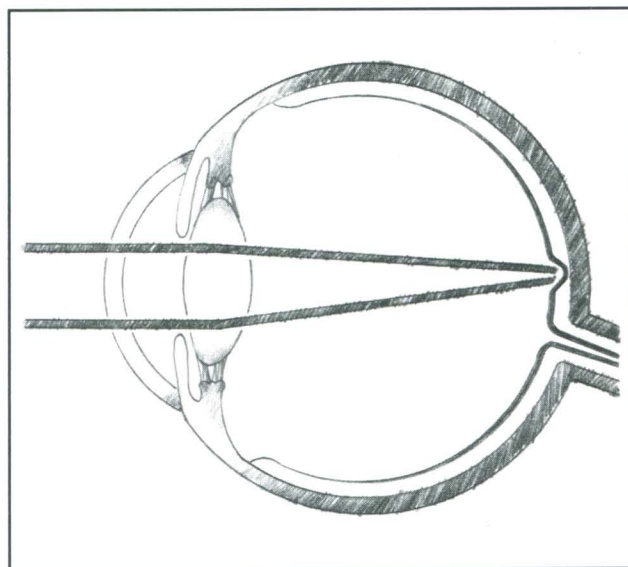
Cataracts are most often found in persons over age 55, but are also occasionally found in younger persons, even newborns.

Cataracts usually develop in both eyes, but often at different rates. Some cataracts develop slowly over a period of years and others form rapidly within a few months.

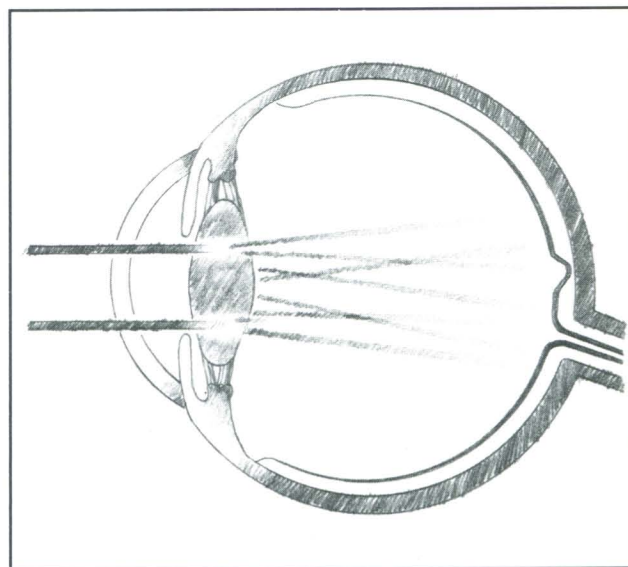
In a comprehensive eye examination, your doctor of optometry can determine whether or not you have cataracts.

Cataracts vary in their development from person to person, so the symptoms may also vary. Here are some common symptoms that people experience:

- increasing haziness causing blurred or distorted vision...colors may seem yellowed
- the appearance of dark spots or shadows that seem to move when the eye moves
- an increasing need for more light to see clearly
- a tendency to become more nearsighted because of increasing density of the lens



*Light enters the eye through the lens and is focused on the retina (above). A cataract, a clouding of the lens, prevents light from being focused properly on the retina (below).*



- double vision
- a gradual loss of color vision
- a stage where it is easier to see without glasses...second sight

*(over, please)*

**HEALTHY EYES MEAN A BETTER LIFE**

## HEALTHY EYES MEAN A BETTER LIFE

Currently, there is no proven method to prevent cataracts from forming or to make the cloudy lens clear after a cataract has developed. Your doctor of optometry can prescribe changes in your glasses or contact lenses to help you see more clearly as your cataract develops.

Ultimately, if your cataract impairs your daily activities, your optometrist can refer you to an eye surgeon who may recommend surgical removal of the cataract. The surgery is relatively uncomplicated and has a 95% success rate.

When your eye's natural lens is removed during cataract surgery, some type of

treatment is usually needed to achieve clear, comfortable vision.

Intraocular lenses, contact lenses and glasses are all common forms of post-cataract vision correction. Intraocular lens implants are inserted at the time of surgery and serve as "new" lenses. Daily wear and continuous wear contact lenses have also become increasingly popular as post-cataract vision correction.

Whatever the treatment, regular optometric followup care is important in making sure you maintain good vision and eye health.