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Oak Valley
Health

Cataracts
Patient education

What is a cataract?

A cataract is a protein buildup that causes your eye's lens to become cloudy. Normally, the lens is clear. It is located in the area of the eye behind the iris and pupil. The lens focuses light on the retina, allowing you to see clearly. Your vision may become blurry if the lens becomes cloudy.

Cataracts can produce a number of visual symptoms including blurred vision and glare. They can occur in one or both eyes and if very severe can cause the pupil to appear white.

What can cause a cataract?

- Age related eye changes
- It is developed when the buildup of protein clouds the lens and lets less light pass through to the retina, which causes blurry vision
- Other causes include certain medications, trauma, and/or inflammation

What increases the risks?

- Increasing age, especially those over 60 years
- Diabetes
- High blood pressure
- Certain medications, like steroids or hormone replacement therapy
- Family history of cataracts
- Smoking and/or drinking alcohol heavily
- Sun exposure without eye protection
- Obesity
- Previous eye trauma or surgery

How do I know that I have a cataract?

- Vision is blurred (like looking through a dirty window)
- Glare from lights

How is this treated?
Cataracts are treated with surgery (removal of the dirty lens and replacement with a clear implant)

Where can I get more information?
Cataracts | The Canadian Association of Optometrists
Website: opto.ca/health-library/cataracts

What are Cataracts? | The American Academy of Opthalmology
Website: aao.org/eye-health/diseases/what-are-cataracts

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