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Cataracts

C4 Sightcare
OPTOMETRISTS

Cataracts

Over half of those over 65 have some cataract development and most cases can be treated successfully with surgery. A cataract is not a skin that grows over the eye but a clouding of part of the eye called the lens. Vision becomes blurred or dim because light cannot pass through the clouded lens to the back of the eye.

What causes a cataract?

Cataracts can form at any age, but most often are a natural consequence of getting older. They develop slowly and are painless. In younger people they can result from an injury, taking certain medication, long-standing inflammation, or illnesses such as diabetes.

What are the symptoms?

Common symptoms may include the following complaints:

*'I'm not seeing as well as I used to'
You may notice that your vision is blurred,
or that your glasses seem dirty or
scratched.*

*'I sometimes see double'
The cloudiness in the lens may occur in
more than one place, causing a double
image.*

*'My vision is poor in bright light'
Bright light or very sunny days may make it
more difficult to see.*

*'I've noticed a change in colours'
As the cataract develops, its centre becomes
more and more yellow, giving everything
you see a yellowish tinge.*

Experiencing these symptoms can also be a sign of other eye problems so it is important to consult your optometrist for an eye examination.

What can be done?

Early cataracts often make you more short-sighted, which in the early stages can be compensated for by altering the prescription of your glasses. Tinted lenses or shielding your eyes from the sun may also help. However, the benefit is usually only short-lived as the cataract continues to progress and the symptoms increase. At this stage the most effective treatment for cataracts is a simple operation to remove the cloudy lens. Your optometrist will advise you when you need to be referred to your GP or hospital. Cataract surgery is one of the most common surgical procedures and in most cases can be carried out under local anaesthetic on a day-case basis, without an overnight stay in hospital. Diets or drugs have not been shown to slow or stop the development of cataracts.

What is a lens implant?

When the cloudy lens has been surgically removed it is replaced by a plastic lens implanted in the eye so that it can focus properly. Once the eye has healed a change of spectacles is usually required. Occasionally your doctor will decide the eye is not suitable for a lens implant. In these cases, contact lenses or special glasses will be prescribed instead.

Where can I get more information about cataracts?

Royal National Institute for the Blind

Link to RNIB Website for Cataracts is:

<http://www.rnib.org.uk/eyehealth/eyeconditions/conditionsac/Pages/cataract.aspx>