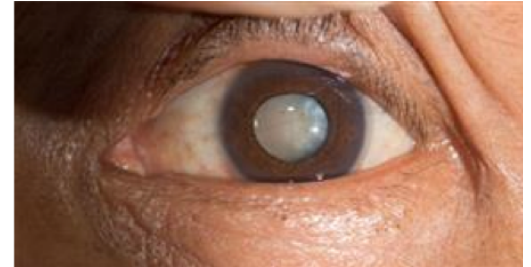




What Are Cataracts?

Behind the pupil of the eye sits a natural 'lens', which at birth is clear and flexible. As we age, this lens gradually becomes cloudy and rigid, and by the age of 80, is often so cloudy that it becomes difficult to clearly see through. This is called a cataract. It is the number one cause of vision loss in people over 40 but is often 'curable' through surgery.



<https://www.aao.org/eye-health/diseases/what-are-cataracts>

Symptoms

- » Direct light or sunlight may become harder to tolerate, and may cause discomforting glare
- » Driving at night may become challenging, as oncoming headlights may seem too bright
- » Colors may lose their brightness or appear more yellow; similar colors may become harder to distinguish

Prevention/Risk Factors

Listed are some of the factors that can increase your chances of acquiring cataracts and tips on prevention:

- » Smoking: A key risk factor for cataracts, smoking should be avoided
- » UV light: Protect your eyes from the sun by wearing good quality, UV blocking sunglasses, and a hat
- » Diabetes: Keep blood sugars at a consistent, healthy level as recommended by your doctor

Other factors that can lead to earlier than average cataract onset:

- » High myopia (extreme short sightedness)
- » Family history
- » Previous eye injuries
- » Prolonged use of corticosteroids
- » Obesity
- » Hormone replacement therapy
- » High alcohol consumption



Treatment

Many people don't notice any major problems when first diagnosed with cataracts. Making minor changes such as a stronger glasses prescription or using a reading ('task') light can create a significant improvement.

However, once vision loss begins making daily tasks more challenging, it may be time to consider surgery.

The good news with cataracts is that, for the most part, they are 'curable' through a simple surgical procedure. During this brief (less than 1 hour) surgery, the doctor will remove the cloudy, natural lens and replace it with a new, artificial lens called an intraocular lens (IOL). There are different types of intraocular lenses (IOL), your cataract surgeon will consult with you regarding the type that is most beneficial for your needs.

**For more information on living with vision loss, contact
Lighthouse Low Vision Services at: (206) 436-2154
OR
bit.ly/LighthouseLVS**

References:

Cataract Surgery, American Academy of Ophthalmology
<https://www.aao.org/eye-health/diseases/what-is-cataract-surgery>

What Are Cataracts?, American Academy of Ophthalmology
<https://www.aao.org/eye-health/diseases/what-are-cataracts>