Cataracts

What Is A Cataract?

In a normal eye, the lens is clear. In an eye that has a cataract, the lens has become cloudy or tinted. It is like a window that has become fogged with steam. The development of a cataract is usually age related. However, there are other reasons cataracts develop. For instance, long term medication use, medical problems such as diabetes, an injury to the eye, or long term unprotected exposure to the sun. These can all preclude cataract development.

How Do You Know If You Have a Cataract?

When a person has a cataract, they can experience some or all of the following symptoms:

- Painless blurring of vision
- Light sensitivity or glare
- Frequent eyeglass prescription changes
- Double vision in one eye
- A need for brighter light to read
- Poor night vision
- Fading or yellowing of colors
It is not possible to give an answer to how fast a cataract develops. This depends on the individual and circumstances. When a cataract develops due to age, it may happen gradually over years. People with diabetes or taking medication might develop a cataract over a period of months. If the clouding of the lens is away from the center, a person might not even know they are developing a cataract.

Often a patient ends up at an ophthalmologist's office because they are experiencing some or all of the above symptoms. Upon receiving a thorough eye examination, the presence and extent of the cataract can be determined.

**What Is The Treatment For Cataracts?**

Having a cataract is a treatable condition. If a cataract is mild, a change in your eyeglass prescription might be all that is needed to improve your vision. However, surgery is THE ONLY WAY to remove a cataract. Medications, vitamins, exercises and or optical devices will not prevent or cure cataracts. Cataract surgery should be considered when the decreased vision interferes with your daily activities.

**What Is Cataract Surgery?**

Cataract surgery is performed by an ophthalmologist as an outpatient service either at a Hospital or an ambulatory surgery center. The operation is typically done under a local anesthetic. During cataract surgery the cloudy lens is removed from the eye and usually replaced by a permanent intraocular lens implant. Incredible advances have been made in the technology and procedures used by an ophthalmologist to perform this surgery. Some surgeons, myself included, perform the “NO STITCH” cataract surgery. As the name implies, the incision used to remove the cloudy lens and replace it with an implant is small enough that stitches are not necessary. This is a large benefit because it reduces the chance of complications and improves healing time. Each year more than 1.4 million people undergo cataract surgery. Over 90% have improved vision and more than 95% of the patients experience no complications. Cataract surgery is a highly successful medical procedure.

For more information about Cataracts, visit www.geteyesmart.org/eyesmart/diseases/cataracts.cfm.