

# Info sheet:

## Cataracts

### What is a cataract?

A cataract is a clouding of the lens inside the eye which may result in poor vision.

Most cataracts form as a result of ageing and long-term exposure to ultraviolet light.

Cataracts are a leading cause of reversible vision loss in Australia.



Normal vision

### What are the symptoms?

Cataracts are usually associated with:

- Slow and painless blurring of vision that may not improve with prescription glasses.
- Increased sensitivity to bright lights, such as while driving at night.
- Changes in how colour is seen. Objects may appear to have a yellow or brown tinge.



Example of how cataracts may affect vision

### Who is at risk?

- People aged over 40. For each decade over 50 years of age the risk more than doubles.
- People who spend long periods of time exposed to sunlight such as farmers and outdoor workers.
- People who have diabetes, smokers and those who have used corticosteroid medications for long periods.
- People who have had an eye injury.

## What can be done?

- Wear sunglasses and a hat when outdoors to protect the eyes from the sun.
- Stop smoking.
- Have regular eye tests with an eye health professional (optometrist or ophthalmologist). Eye tests are essential for the detection of cataracts.
- Visit an eye health professional without delay if your vision changes rapidly.

New prescription glasses may help to improve vision for some people. But as cataracts worsen, surgery may be required to restore vision.

Cataract surgery is performed by an ophthalmologist. The cloudy lens in the eye is replaced with a new synthetic one. Cataract surgery is common, very safe, and is usually done as a day surgery procedure under local anaesthesia.

### Save Your Sight – Get Tested

## For more information

- Speak to an eye health professional or GP.
- Visit [www.visioninitiative.org.au](http://www.visioninitiative.org.au)

A Medicare rebate is available for most optometry services. You do not need a referral to see an optometrist. If required, your GP or optometrist can refer you to an ophthalmologist.

There are services and supports to help people adjust to vision loss, remain independent and continue to take part in their chosen activities. Speak to an eye health professional or your GP to find out more.



A partnership promoting eye health and vision care



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