

Cataracts



What is a cataract?

A cataract is clouding of the lens inside the eye. Poor vision results because the cloudiness interferes with light entering the eye.

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

Cataract surgery is one of the most commonly performed surgical procedures in Australia and has a high success rate.

What are the symptoms of a cataract?

- Gradual and painless blurring of vision and an increased sensitivity to glare especially while driving at night is often noticed.
- Vision with a cataract can be likened to looking through a dirty window.
- Changes in colour perception, with a yellowing of images may be noticed.
- People with a cataract may experience difficulty finding adequate light sources while reading and find that eventually getting new glasses does not help this problem.

Who is at risk of cataracts?

- Cataracts are a leading cause of vision impairment in Australia. 31 per cent of the population over the age of 55 has a cataract.
- Increasing age is the most significant risk factor for cataracts.
- Cataracts are associated with sun exposure.
- Other risk factors include diabetes, corticosteroid use, trauma and smoking.

What is the best defence against cataracts?

- Stopping smoking will reduce the risk of developing cataracts.
- Protecting eyes from the harmful effects of the sun by wearing sunglasses and a hat and keeping out of the sun can help protect eyes from ultraviolet light.
- People with cataracts may need to update their glasses more frequently to ensure optimum vision.
- If spectacle correction does not improve vision, surgery can be performed by an ophthalmologist to remove the cataract.

Where to go for more information?

For more information on cataracts and treatment visit The Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Ophthalmologists website www.ranzco.edu

Information on eye testing is available from general practitioners, optometrists or by referral to an ophthalmologist (medical eye specialist).

For more information on eye health visit www.visioninitiative.org.au