

## 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](http://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](http://www.visioninitiative.org.au)