

CATARACT

What is a cataract?

A cataract is a clouding of the lens inside the eye. Looking through a cloudy lens is like looking through a dirty window. Glasses **cannot** fix bad vision caused by a cataract. People with cataracts often say their vision is foggy. It is like looking through a stain on their glasses. They say it is hard to see at night. Eyes become more sensitive to headlights in the dark.

How do you get a cataract?

Cataract is a normal change that takes place as we get older. People who have been exposed to a lot of sunlight during their lives have worse cataracts. Cataracts are more common in people who have diabetes or take steroid medicines. An injury to the eye can also cause cataracts to form.

How do you know if you have cataracts?

Getting an eye exam can let you know if you have cataracts. Sometimes cataracts can be seen in the eye. It looks like a gray or white cloud. An eye doctor using special equipment can see cataracts. A cataract is **not in front** of the eye. The cataract **is** behind the colored part of the eye, inside the eyeball.

What can be done about cataracts?

The only treatment for cataracts is surgery. Surgery is done on people who have bad vision. Bad vision is when you are not able to do your normal daily activities. If your vision interferes with your daily activities, you need to see the eye doctor.

My doctor says that I have cataracts. Do I have to have surgery?

The decision to have surgery is up to you. It is usually not worth going through surgery if you have mild cataracts. Surgery is advised if your cataracts are bad. The time you spend deciding to have surgery usually does not affect the result of the surgery. If you ever decide to have the surgery it will work. Sometimes patients with other eye problems will need cataract surgery first. Then the doctor can take care of the other eye problem. In these cases your doctor will let you know what is best for you.

How does cataract surgery work?

At Tuba City Indian Medical Center, cataract surgery is a day surgery. This means that you do not stay in the hospital. After surgery the eye is sore for several days. The pain is not bad. Often vision is better the first day after surgery. But it takes weeks of healing and a new pair of glasses to get the best possible vision.

Will cataracts come back after surgery?

No, a cataract cannot come back. Some people will have a thin piece of tissue called “after cataract” form in their eye. This may happen a few months after the surgery. This growth can make your vision cloudy again. This growth is easy to treat with a laser treatment. It takes just a few minutes in the clinic and it will never grow back again.