

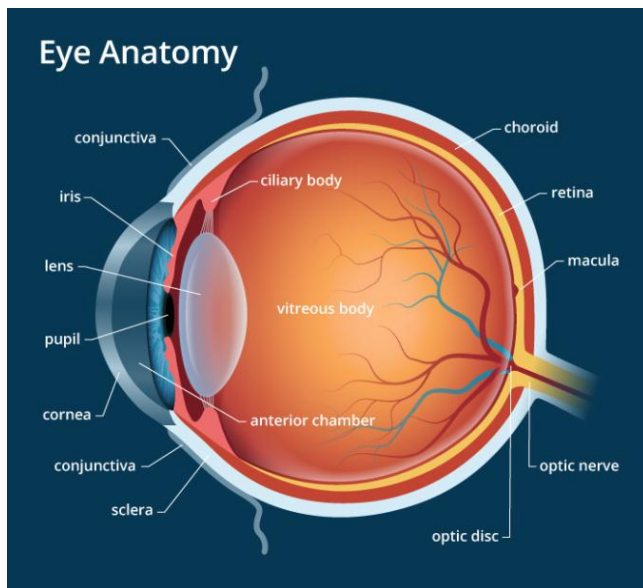
# June 2019 Health Article: Cataracts

“I’m excited about seeing things, and I’m interested in the way I think other people saw things”. Roy Lichtenstein. Sight is one of the five senses and so an important way we get information to process and react to that input. What happens when over time, the vision become blurry and that information is distorted or limited. How does that affect us?

The topic this month is on cataracts and we will review definitions, symptoms, types, diagnosis/treatment, and prevention. This is only a short review and the references will be other areas you can explore this topic more closely on your own.

Definition:

Cataracts is the darkening and clouding of the eye lens. The lens is the clear structure that is behind the iris and the pupil of the eye. The lens focuses the light coming through the eye onto the retina in the back of the eye.



As we age, the lens, as it becomes cloudier, distorts the image to be blurry, dull, or less sharp (visual acuity). So it feels like we are looking through a thick mist or a foggy window. The lens slowly changes from clear

to a yellow/brown adding a brownish tint to shade to the vision. Not only sharpness of the image changes but also color vision so it will be hard to differentiate blues and purples.

Common Symptoms:

One in five of adults over 65 will develop cataracts and from ages of the mid-seventies through the eighties, the percentage is 50%. So this disease is often an issue as we age. Here is a list of symptoms.

- Cloudy or blurry vision
- Colors seem faded
- Glare. Headlights, lamps, or sunlight may appear too bright. Halos can be seen around lights.
- Poor night vision
- Double vision or multiple images in one eye and this may clear and as the cataract gets larger, this symptom can go away.
- Frequent prescription changes in your eyeglasses or contact lens

**If you have any of these symptoms, check with your eye care professional.**

Common Types:

- **Nuclear Cataracts:** are in the center of the lens and often causes double vision or multiple copies of the image.
- **Cortical Cataracts:** affect the edges of the lens resulting in problems with glare.
- **Posterior Sub-capsular Cataracts:** occur in the back of the lens and reduce your ability to read and can also result with glare and halo problems.

Cataract problems are often due to aging but there are other types such as:

- **Secondary Cataracts:** which can form after eye surgery, diabetes, or steroid use.
- **Traumatic Cataracts:** develop after eye trauma, sometimes years later.
- **Congenital Cataracts:** infants born with or develop them later and often affect both eyes; these are often small.

- **Radiation Cataracts:** develop after exposure to ionizing radiation.

#### Diagnosis/Treatment:

There are several tests done by your eye care professional such as a visual acuity, dilated eye exam, and tonometry to measure the pressure inside the eye. The initial treatment is with new eyeglasses, brighter lighting and anti-glare sunglasses. The cataracts are removed surgically, in which you can stay awake through, which take about an hour to do the procedure.

#### Prevention:

- See you eye doctor regularly and how often based on recommendations by your eye doctor.
- Quit smoking
- Wear sunglasses that block the UVB waves and a broad-brimmed hat
- Care for other medical conditions such as diabetes
- Healthy weight
- Diet of fruits and vegetables especially colorful ones that are high in vitamins A,C,E, and K. Eating vegetables is preferable to taking only a multivitamin tablet.

#### References:

[HealthinAging.org](http://HealthinAging.org) is a great site for many areas in health related to aging. It is worth looking at this site for other conditions.

Cataracts, <https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/cataracts/symptoms-causes/syc-20353790?9=1> Mayo Clinic site is another trusted site for medical information. You can type Mayoclinic.org to look at the site.

Sella, Ruti. Afshari, Natalie. 2019. Nutritional Effect on Age-Related Cataract Formation and Progression. *Curr Opin Ophthalmol.* 30(1)63-69.

Facts on Cataracts. [https://nei.nih.gov/health/cataract/caract\\_facts](https://nei.nih.gov/health/cataract/caract_facts)

