

## **Cataracts**

### **What are Cataracts?**

A cataract is a clouding of the lens (clear part of the eye that helps focus light or an image on the retina) in the eye that affects vision and obstructs the passage of light to your eye; this causes very blurry images. Early in the development of cataracts, the power of the lens may be increased causing near-sightedness. Cataracts also makes the lens gradually turn yellow and causes opacification (the process of becoming cloudy or opaque) which may reduce the perception of blue colours and can make the image you see a brownish colour. Cataracts cause swelling and shrinkage of the lens which causes a complete loss of transparency. With time the cataract cortex liquefies to form a white fluid which can cause a severe inflammation of the lens if it ruptures. Cataracts can affect either or both eyes which slowly will cause a person to go blind if not treated. Cataracts also cause: poor night vision, glare on the lights may seem too bright and may cause you to see a halo around all lights and multiple images on one eye. If you smoke, you have a higher chance of getting cataracts; cataracts are also more likely to develop during old age.

### **Treatments**

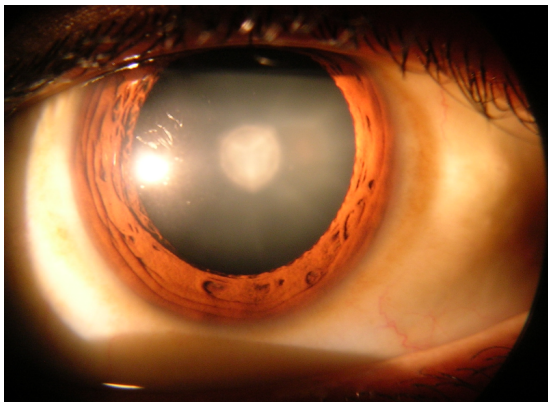
A non-surgical treatment are eye drops with the antioxidant N-acetylcarnosine has been proven to reduce glare sensitivity in patients with cataracts. In the long term, N-acetylcarnosine in the eye drop slows down the progress of the disease.

An operation on the cataracts can be done at any stage of the disease. However, it is better to wait until there is a noticeable difference in vision loss before thinking of surgery. The most effective way to remove cataracts is to make an incision into the capsule of the lens to

surgically remove it. There are two types of eye surgeries that can be performed to remove cataracts: extracapsular cataract extraction (ECCE) and intracapsular cataract extraction (ICCE). ECCE is when you remove the lens but leave the majority of the lens capsule intact. High frequency sound waves are also used to break up the lens before the extraction of the cataract. ICCE consists of removing both the lens and lens capsule, but it is rarely performed now. In both surgeries, the cataractous lens is removed and replaced by a plastic lens which will stay in the eye permanently. Complications are possible after surgery, these complications include: endophthalmitis (inflammation in the internal coats of the eye), posterior capsular opacification (a posterior capsule opacity is the presence of a hazy membrane (capsule) just behind an intraocular lens implant.) and retinal detachment (when the Retina peels away from its underlying layer of support tissue).

### **Life expectancy and quality of life during treatment**

There is no difference between the life expectancy from someone with cataracts and someone with without it. Cataracts is not life threatening. The quality of life during treatment is not bad at all because most of the time the patient can go home the same day as the treatment. Unless you take the non-surgical treatment, the only negative thing is you have to put eye drops in your eyes regularly.



<-- An eye with a cataract

