

Cataracts

Is Everything Suddenly Out of Focus?

A cataract is a clouding or darkening that develops in the eye's lens, which is normally clear. It can form when cells in the lens become damaged and clump together, blocking light from entering the eye. When the lens cannot focus light properly on the retina, vision is lost.

No one is sure what causes the cells to become damaged, but it is thought to be part of the natural aging process, as cataracts

affect about half of all Americans over age 65. Occasionally, however, cataracts are seen in younger people and even newborns. They may also result from an injury or disease. Cataracts usually develop in both eyes, but often at different rates. Some take years to develop; others form within a few months. Your eye doctor will be able to determine if you have a cataract during a comprehensive eye exam.

SYMPTOMS TO CHECK FOR:

Blurred, double or distorted vision	Gradual loss of color vision; colors may appear yellowed
Appearance of dark spots or shadows that seem to move when your eyes move	Worsening nearsightedness
Growing need for light to see clearly	A temporary stage in which vision is suddenly better and eyeglasses are not needed

Sources: American Optometric Association, University of Michigan Health System Web site

One Of The Most Reversible Causes of Vision Loss

Surgery is the only proven treatment for cataracts. It is not performed unless and until the cataract interferes with everyday activities. Early on, as the cataract develops, your eye doctor can prescribe changes in your eyeglasses or contact lenses to help you see more clearly.

Cataract surgery is uncomplicated and recovery is fast. It is performed on an outpatient basis and has a 95% success rate. At the time of surgery and after the cataract has been removed, sight is restored by

inserting an intraocular lens implant into the eye to replace its natural lens. Cataracts are one of the most reversible causes of vision loss. Regular comprehensive eye exams are important to ensure that your vision is clear and your eyes remain healthy.

You can help maintain your eye health by limiting exposure to smoke and air pollution, exercising regularly, eating healthy foods and protecting your eyes with sunglasses while you are in the sun.

For more information, call **1.888.550.BLUE (2583)** or TTY **1.800.523.2847** or visit us at **www.fepblue.org** (click on the link to FEP BlueVision). To enroll, visit **www.benefeds.com**.

