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Cataract Eye Surgery: Is It As Scary As It Sounds?

By David Silva

Just the thought of a surgeon messing with your eyes can send a chill through most of us. Cataract

eye surgery is no exception. But with the development of microsurgical procedures, cataract eye surgery is quick, generally without discomfort, and will dramatically restore your vision to the point where you may require prescription glasses for distance vision or reading only.

Primarily distinguished by the clouding of the lens of the eye, a cataract doesn't cause blindness but instead gradually reduces your vision. It does this as it grows from a small area of cloudiness that often goes unnoticed to a much larger area of cloudiness that covers the entire lens. Initially, you may not even be aware of a change in your vision. However, over time, cataracts tend to enlarge to the point where your vision does become affected.

The good news is that cataract eye surgery has become commonplace (there are over one million such surgeries performed each year), and results in success nearly 100% of the time.

Very basic and straightforward, cataract eye surgery involves removing the clouded lens and replacing it with a plastic lens.

There are two fundamental approaches to this eye surgery. The first is called Phacoemulsification and is generally the preferred approach to cataract removal. It involves the use of sound waves to break up the cataract. Here's how it works: a small incision is made on the side of the cornea, (the clear, dome-shaped surface that covers the surface of the eye). The tip of a microsurgical instrument is inserted into the eye. This instrument emits high frequency waves which break up the lens into tiny fragments. The fragments are then removed by suction, using the same instrument.

The second fundamental approach is called Extracapsular surgery. In this approach, a longer incision is made on the side of the cornea and the core of the cloudy lens is removed in a single piece. Any remaining fragments of the lens are removed by suction. Extracapsular surgery requires stitches to close the larger incision and generally takes six to eight weeks to properly heal.

In both cases, after the cornea is removed and replaced with a tiny prescription lens referred to as an

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intraocular lens (IOL). Using a calculated corrective prescription, the IOL clearly focuses light onto the retina, which dramatically improves vision. The new lens feels completely natural, you won't notice it at all, just as you didn't previously notice your cornea.

There are two types of intraocular lenses used for cataract surgery: Monofocal and Multifocal.

Monofocal

With the monofocal lens implant, the lens acts the same as your natural lens, except it cannot adjust focus. The lens is shaped to provide good vision for either farsightedness or nearsightedness, but is unable to improve both distances. Depending on whichever range you choose (most often the monofocal lens is used to improve farsightedness), the other vision distance will require glasses or regular contact lenses.

Multifocal

With the newer multifocal intraocular lens implant, you'll experience normal vision at all distances, which may eliminate the need for prescription glasses. There are some cautions, however. Around 4% of those who receive multifocal lenses experience some night time glare and halos (spheres of illuminated haze surrounding sources of light). These side effects tend to decrease over time and may be minimized with the use of eye drops or prescription glass for night driving.

As with any surgery, there can always be complications. Complete healing for cataract eye surgery may require several weeks, though you should be able to return to your normal routine fairly quickly. You'll likely experience some dryness and itching in your eye during the healing process. Be sure to use your prescribed eye drops and closely follow your doctor's instructions.

Though cataract eye surgery may sound a little unnerving, the procedure is generally quick and painless. More important, it brings with it a 98% success rate. Don't let the process scare you. Talk with your ophthalmologist about your particular situation and the best way to improve your vision.

David Silva is the webmaster for

Eye Surgery Insights,

a website dedicated to informing visitors about

the various forms of

eye surgery

available, including laser eye surgery and Lasik eye surgery.

Common Cataract Surgery Complications

Cataract Eye Surgery: Is It As Scary As It Sounds?

By Gavin Sanderson

Cataract is not a disease. Instead, it is a condition whereby the crystalline lens in the eye develops a clouding or opaqueness. This reduces the amount of light that reaches the retina. It ends up causing a person to experience foggy or hazy vision. The condition will get worse as time passes. The causes of cataracts include aging, prescription drugs, eye trauma or an ongoing medical condition.

Cataracts are treated using surgical removal methods. This is a very common treatment and it has a ninety five percent success rate. There are risks however. Some may develop fluctuating eye pressure, bleeding, infection, inflammation, double vision and loss of vision. There are some common temporary risks that may be corrected with time and then more serious risks. The more common and temporary of the cataract surgery complications include:

Cataract Surgery Complications: Itchiness, Stickiness, and Pain

*Itchiness to the white of the eyes with some redness.

*Stickiness to the eyes in general, along with itchiness. The patient may experience blurry vision for awhile after the procedure.

* Some patients feel pain in their eyes for about a week to two weeks

* Some may have eyelids that ache.

Cataract Surgery Complication: Rip of the Lens

A more serious cataract surgery complication is when the lens behind an eye rips during a surgery. This will cause damage to vision. The doctor must perform another surgery to take away the cataract.

Two types of cataract surgery procedures done today. One is the phacoemulsification surgery and the other is known as extracapsular surgery procedure.

Cataract Surgery Complication: Posterior Capsular Opacification

The phacoemulsification surgery requires a lens capsule or casing to be left in the eye for the benefit of placing an intraocular lens into it. After surgery, one of the more common complications may be that the capsule would become cloudy and develop another cataract within a two year time frame. This complication is termed "posterior capsular opacification". The cataract must then be treated with laser surgery. Other familiar cataract surgery complications are discussed below.

Cataract Surgery Complication: Retinal Detachment

This condition occurs when fluid enters through a tear to the retina. The retina ends up becoming detached from the backside of the eye.

Cataract Surgery Complication: Choroidal Hemorrhage

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Choroids are a web of small blood vessels that supply blood to the retina. Choroidal Hemorrhage is when this web of vessels bleed in the surgery. This may happen to older patients or people who suffer from glaucoma.

Gavin Sanderson is an established freelance writer. You can find more of his writing at

<http://www.cataractzone.com>

and

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