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Cataract Update

By Becky Sisk

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Cataract Awareness

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Cataract Awareness

by Becky Sisk, PhD

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Cataracts are a common cause of vision loss but are easily treated by a qualified ophthalmologist. August is Cataract Awareness Month, a reminder that cataract surgery can clear up your eyesight and improve your quality of life.

According to the American Academy of Ophthalmology, half of the people between age 52 and 64, and almost everyone over the age of 75, will have a cataract. Another way to look at it is that one in seven people in the United States has a cataract.

What Is a Cataract?

A cataract is a clouding in the lens of your eye. The onset of the condition is slow and usually related to aging. Other causes are congenital birth defects, alcoholism, diabetes mellitus, eye injury, smoking, and long-time exposure to ultra-violet (UV) light.

How Would I Know If I Had a Cataract?

Visual problems are not apparent in the beginning stages of a cataract. When they appear, you may have the following symptoms:

- * A gradual blurring of your eyesight.
- * Poor distance vision.
- * A fading or yellowing of colors.
- * Double vision in the affected eye.
- * A heightened sensitivity to light.
- * Trouble seeing well enough to drive at night.
- * Frequent need for changes in eyeglass prescriptions.

How Are Cataracts Treated?

At the onset of cataracts, high magnification glasses may improve vision, but there are no medications or eye-drops that will help. Some people think that a cataract needs to be "ripe" before it can be removed, but this is not true. Instead, cataracts are removed when they interfere with normal activities of daily living.

Ophthalmic surgeons remove cataracts under local anesthesia in the outpatient area of a hospital or in special, stand-alone clinics. They take the cataract out through a tiny slit at the edge of the sac that contains the clouded lens. They usually use "phacoemulsification," a process that liquefies the lens so it can be withdrawn through a needle and syringe.

A clear plastic replacement lens (the intraocular lens) is inserted in the sac and the incision is sewn up with a suture that dissolves later. Other procedures are also used, so you should discuss your own case with your surgeon. The common misconception that lasers are used in cataract surgery

is not true. Fortunately, cataract surgery is covered by insurance and Medicare.

What Will I Be Able to Do After Surgery?

Patients can go home as soon as they are stable. You should avoid heavy activity and avoid rubbing the affected eye. Other instructions depend on the physician's preferences. Most cataract surgeries are successful, but a few complications are possible, so be sure to follow up with the surgeon postoperatively.

You will probably be happy with the results of your surgery. However, be aware that cataract surgery will not help other eye problems you may have, such as glaucoma, macular degeneration, or eye problems related to diabetes.

What Type of Doctors Perform Cataract Surgery?

Cataracts require medical intervention, so it is important that you go to a board-certified ophthalmic surgeon, rather than to an optometrist, when you suspect a cataract. Doctors with the initials "F.A.C.S." behind their names have demonstrated their knowledge and skills and are board-certified.

Where Can I Find Further Information?

Try these websites:

* The American Academy of Ophthalmology
http://www.medem.com/MedLB/articleslb.cfm?sub_cat=119

* The American Society of Cataract and Refractive Surgery
<http://ascrs.org/eye/eye.html>

* The National Eye Institute
<http://www.nei.nih.gov/health/index.htm>

* Prevent Blindness America
http://www.preventblindness.org/eye_problems/cataractFAQ.html

Becky Sisk is owner and webmaster of NurseScribe, <http://www.eNurseScribe.com/>.

This article is for information use only and is not medical advice. Please consult your physician if you are concerned with the condition of your eyes or other medical conditions.

For free articles on medical topics, go to <http://www.eNurseScribe.com/medarts.htm>.

Becky Sisk is owner and webmaster of NurseScribe, <http://www.eNurseScribe.com/>.

Common Cataract Surgery Complications

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.

Cataract Update

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

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
and



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