

New advances in Cataract Surgery

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The right lens makes a difference.

As people begin to develop visual problems related to cataract formation, they now have options to consider that were not available even two years ago. New technology provides better ways to correct vision after cataract surgery. For most people, this means being able to see clearly without glasses at any range, near and distance.

Around age 45, the natural lens inside the eye begins to undergo changes that gradually degrade the quality of our vision. We initially perceive these changes as increasing difficulty with our near vision. Eventually we begin to notice blurring of our vision at other distances and increasing difficulties driving at night due to glare from oncoming headlights. Bright sunlight may bother us more and subtle changes in our color perception and contrast sensitivity slowly diminish the quality of our vision. This occurs because the lenses in our eyes lose the ability to change shape or focus for different distances. Along with this a gradual clouding or loss of normal transparency of the lens occurs. These changes often affect much more than our ability to read the "eye chart," and can take many years to develop.

Cataract Surgery

At some point, your ophthalmologist or optometrist will no longer be able to compensate for these changes by adjusting your glasses or contact lenses.

Today there is no medical treatment that will reverse the cataract formation. In the early 21st century, cataract surgery is by far the best and safest option to effectively improve our vision. In many cases it allows us to see better than we have in 15-20 years. Today's techniques are quite elegant. A small incision, less than 3 millimeters in size, is made on the clear part of the eye called the cornea. The cloudy lens is then removed through this incision using ultrasound and a new lens is delicately inserted into the same bag that held the original lens. The new lens stays in the eye for the lifetime of the patient. The patient returns home immediately, often without even needing a patch over the operated eye.

Intraocular Lens Options
Various types of lenses are now available to place in the eye after cataract removal. Many patients are learning that they have an important decision to make regarding what type of lens they would personally prefer. Traditional lenses are monofocal, meaning that they only focus objects at one distance. Consequently, someone that has had a traditional lens placed that corrects for distance vision will require glasses to read the newspaper and work on the computer. Various traditional lens brands are on the market. One particular class, commonly referred to as 'aspheric' lenses, has upgraded optics to enhance

clarity of your vision, especially while driving at night or in a rainstorm. Medicare will pay 80% of your cataract surgery and the cost of the monofocal lens. This is considered basic coverage.

New technology implants include multifocal lenses, meaning they focus objects from multiple distances. One example is the AcrySof® ReSTOR® diffractive implant, which is designed to improve your vision to see at near, far, and intermediate distances. Based on FDA clinical data, there is an 80% chance the patient undergoing the procedure will never have to wear glasses again. The goal of the multifocal lens surgery is to restore your ability to read the newspaper, prescription bottles, mail and to see many other things near and far without glasses. There is an additional cost for having this new lens implanted. Medicare will now allow you to pay for the upgrade, if you choose to do so.

Today's technology provides excellent options for those that have developed cataracts. It is important to discuss these options with your doctor while at the same time consider the benefits and potential risks that exist with cataract surgery.

