



## Cataract Causes

As we age, some of the proteins that make up the lens of the eye may clump together and cloud a small area of the lens causing blurred or tinted vision. This is a cataract! Most cataracts are related to aging, but certain diseases or behaviors may also increase your risk of developing the condition. Diabetes, smoking, alcohol use or extended sun exposure can all increase one's risk of developing a cataract. If you are experiencing cataract symptoms, consult an ophthalmologist to see if treatment is necessary.

## Cataract Treatment

Early cataract symptoms can be very easy to treat. New eyeglasses, better lighting, magnifying lenses, and sunglasses are all simple ways to improve vision problems caused by cataracts, but if these treatments do not help, surgery is the only effective treatment.

Cataract removal surgery is only necessary if the cataract symptoms affect normal activities such as driving, reading, or looking at computer or video screens, even with glasses. Cataracts typically do not harm the eye, so waiting for a convenient time to have surgery is acceptable.

## Cataract Surgery

Cataract surgery is one of the most common procedures in Canada today. During cataract surgery, an ophthalmologist removes the clouded lens of the eye and replaces it with a clear artificial lens. The procedure usually takes less than an hour and is performed on an outpatient basis. If cataracts are present in both eyes, they are typically treated four to eight weeks apart.

Prior to surgery, patients receive numbing eye drops and a sedative. The surgeon then makes a small incision in the eye and removes the cataract via one of two methods:

In phacoemulsification, the more common method, the surgeon uses an instrument that emits ultrasonic waves to break down the lens into a liquid. The emulsified lens is then suctioned from the eye.

In extracapsular cataract extraction, the surgeon makes a larger incision and manually breaks the lens into smaller pieces, which he or she then suctioned out of the eye.

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