

## RECOGNIZING

# Cataracts

### Watch For Vision Changes As You Age

As life goes on, we all start to notice certain changes that are a natural part of aging. Maybe our joints aren't as flexible as before, or our hearing just isn't what it used to be. Our vision, too, may be less sharp than it once was.

One cause of impaired eyesight later in life is cataracts. A cataract is a clouding of the lens in the eye. People with cataracts may notice cloudy vision or halos around lights when driving at night. If left untreated, cataracts can greatly limit vision. In fact, some people with severe cataracts may only be able to tell the difference between light and dark.

Cataracts are common in older adults. About half of all Americans will either have cataracts or have had cataract surgery by the time they reach age 80.

#### How are Cataracts Treated?

Early symptoms of cataract can be improved with eyeglasses, brighter lighting, anti-glare sunglasses or magnifying lenses. If these steps don't help, surgery is the only effective option for treatment. Surgery involves removing the cloudy lens and replacing it with a plastic lens.

Cataract procedures are among the most common surgeries performed in the United States. Most patients recover in just a few weeks, and many have

**CONTINUED**  
ON NEXT PAGE

(Continued from previous page)

improved eyesight after a few days. Recent advances have allowed doctors to tailor new lenses to patients and help reduce the need for eyeglasses after surgery.

The decision to have cataract surgery is a personal one that should be made between you and your doctor. Some experts advise that cataracts be removed only when vision loss interferes with your everyday activities, such as driving, reading or watching TV.

#### How To Prevent Cataracts

The best way to prevent or delay cataracts is to protect your eyes from harmful ultraviolet rays from the sun. Try wearing

sunglasses or a hat with a brim. Researchers also believe that good nutrition can help reduce the risk of age-related cataract. They recommend eating plenty of green leafy vegetables, fruits, nuts and other healthy foods. Also, don't smoke, because smoking may speed cataract development.

To screen for early signs of eye disease, it's recommended that everyone have a dilated eye exam at age 40, even if your vision seems fine. To be sure, many serious eye diseases have no early warning signs, so it's important to make regular eye exams part of your standard health care routine. Once you're in your 60s, a dilated eye exam is usually advised every year.

### Cataract Symptoms

Check with an eye care professional if you have any of these symptoms. They may also be a sign of other eye problems:

- Cloudy or blurry vision.
- Colors seem faded.
- Glare—headlights, lamps or sunlight may appear too bright. A halo may appear around lights.
- Poor night vision.
- Double vision or multiple images in one eye. (This symptom may clear as the cataract gets larger.)
- Frequent prescription changes in your eyeglasses or contact lenses.

