

# Cataracts Block Light From Eye By Clouding Lens

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Cataract is one of the most common causes of blindness in the older adults of this country. Why this degenerate process occurs inside the lens of the eye is not yet known nor can it be prevented. Cataracts will ultimately develop in the eyes of any person who lives long enough, we are told, but why do they develop so many years earlier in some persons than in others remains a mystery. Eye specialists warn that neglect of the condition may

well result in permanent loss of sight.  
Cataracts may occur at any age. They may appear in the wake of a severe eye injury, for example, or occur in association with diabetes. They may even be found in infants (congenital cataracts), the result of faulty development before birth or often because of German measles occurring early in the mother's pregnancy. Most cataracts, however, are found in persons over 50 (senile cataract).  
Cataract is a clouding or

opaque discoloration of the normally clear eye lens, a process that blocks some of the light rays entering the eyes. For as the cataract matures or "ripens," the cloudiness becomes denser until the point may be reached when no light at all can pass through the lens to the retina. The condition may occur in one or both eyes but, not being contagious, cannot pass from one eye to the other.  
IN THE OLDER person, both eyes are often involved, since

the gradual degeneration of the lens tissue would then usually affect both eyes at the same time.  
Symptoms of cataract, besides discoloration of the lens, include dimmed or blurred vision, double lights where only one exists, or the seeing of an object in such a way that part of it appears to be missing. Persons having any or even all of these symptoms do not necessarily have cataracts, but they may indicate that an eye examination by a

competent eye specialist is in order.  
No cataract, however slow its development, should go untreated. As it approaches maturity, at which time the entire contents within the lens capsule is opaque, conditions may occur which will cause acute glaucoma or iritis, both serious eye conditions. In the event of either of these occurrences, urgent surgery is required and the outcome is less favorable than if the operation had been performed be-

fore the emergency situation developed.  
FROM START to finish, barring complications, the operation for cataracts is a relatively benign or mild procedure for the patient, in expert surgical opinion. It is not an operation to be dreaded or feared. But, even with only a modicum of health, it should be done regardless of the age of the individual. Restoration of vision in the older person is a powerful help in maintaining and improving both mental and

physical health, whereas permitting needless blindness to occur is unpardonable.  
Surgery for cataract is now recommended as soon as vision is noticeably affected. This is a vast improvement over the practices of years past when it was thought to be necessary to wait until the cataract reached its full maturity.  
There is no drug that will "dissolve" cataracts or prevent their occurrence, and people should avoid all medications that make these claims. Surgery is the only safe and effective

tive treatment and is successful 95 times out of a 100.  
FOLLOWING removal of the clouded lens of the eyes, there is nothing for focusing and vision is dim. After a short time cataract glasses are prescribed to replace the natural lens, and the patient regains his sight.  
A pamphlet on cataracts will be mailed to anyone sending a card of request to the Division of Public Health Education, Education, Los Angeles County Health Department, 241 N. Figueroa St., Los Angeles 12.

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