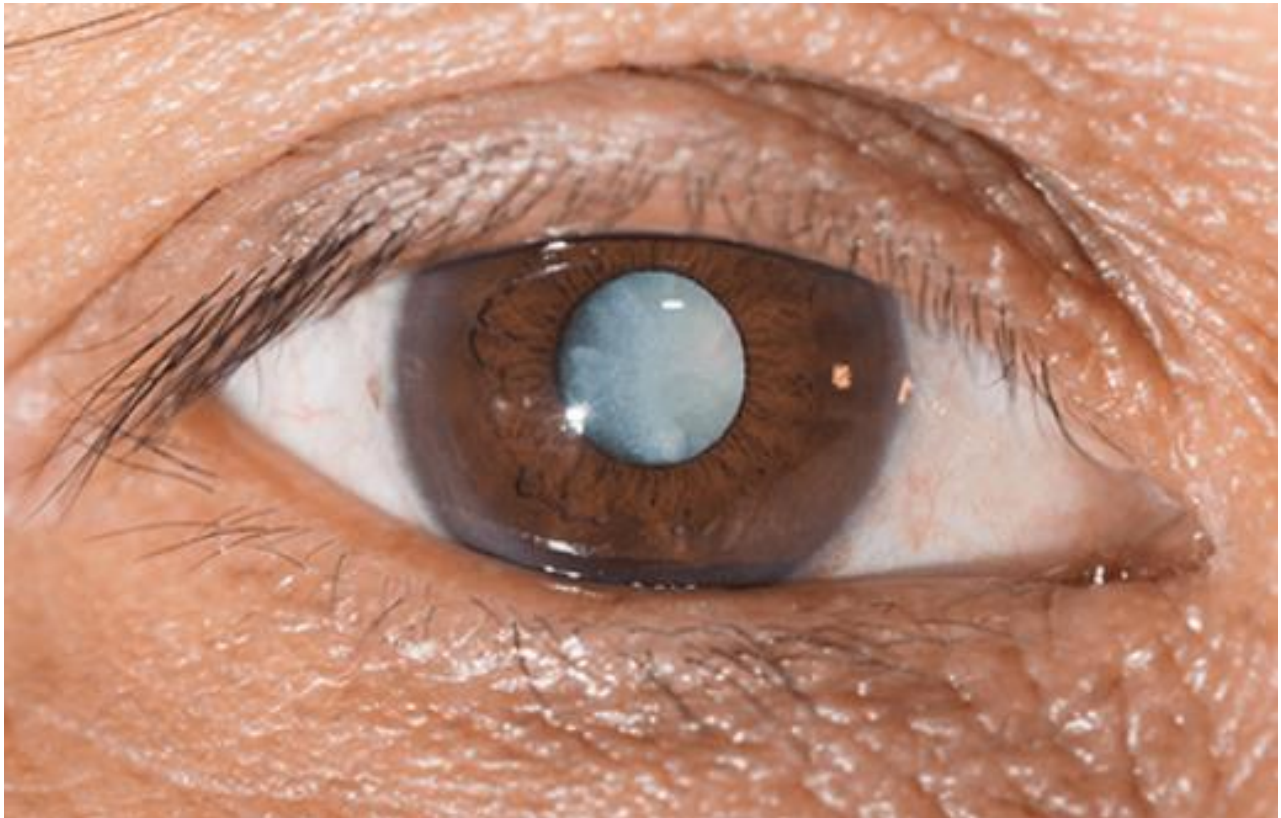
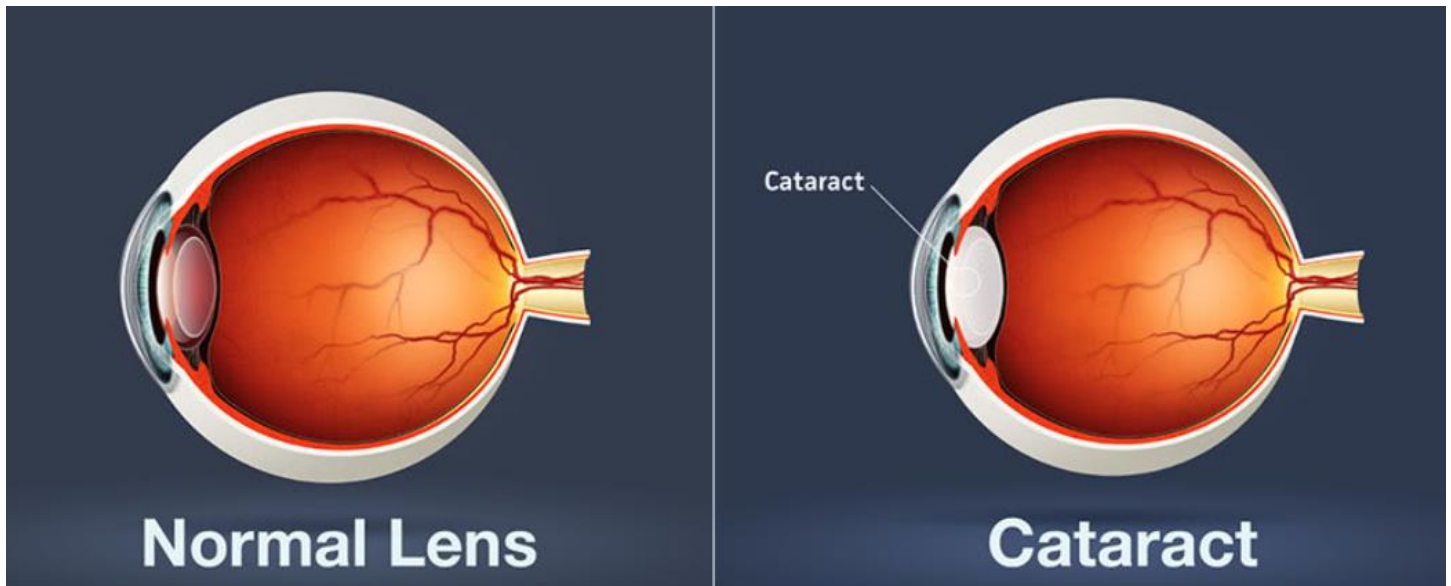


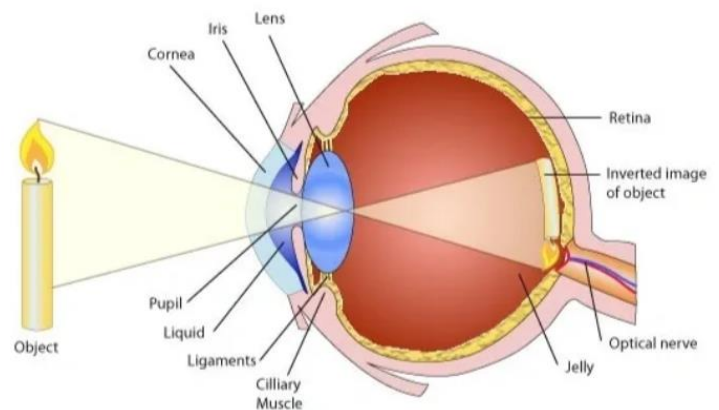
# What Is a Cataract?





## What Is a Cataract?

Your eyes are like tiny cameras that help you see the world around you. **Inside each eye is a crystalline lens** that focuses light onto the back of the eye, the retina. The retina then sends signals to your brain, which turns them into the images you see. When this lens is clear, light can pass through easily, and your vision is sharp and bright.



A cataract is formed when this clear lens becomes cloudy or foggy. Instead of letting light pass through clearly, the *cloudy lens* scatters the light, making your vision blurry or hazy—like looking through a foggy window. Cataracts can affect one or both eyes, although they usually don't develop equally at the same time.



## What Causes Cataracts?

Cataracts are most often caused by natural aging. Over time, the proteins inside the lens begin to break down and clump together, creating cloudy spots. Most people start to develop cataracts after age 60, though they can appear earlier.

However, cataracts aren't only due to age. Other causes and risk factors include:

**Family history** – If your parents or grandparents had cataracts, you may be more likely to get them.

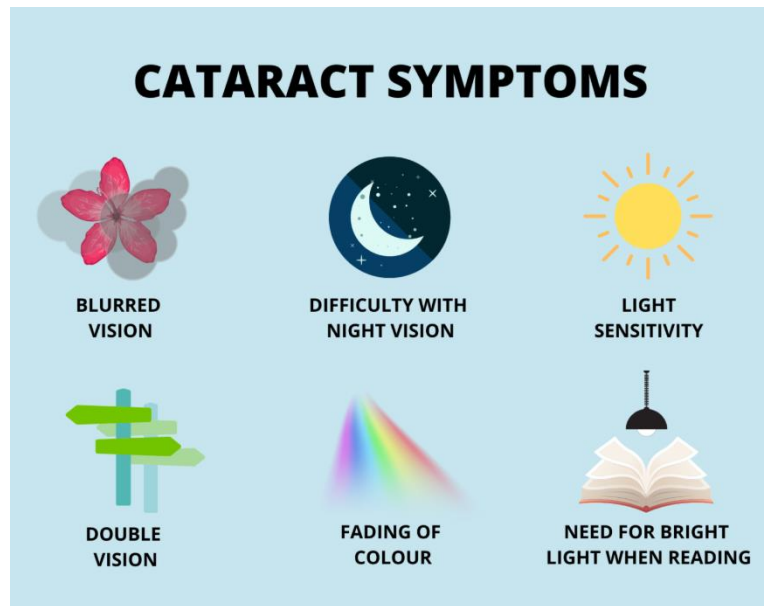
**Diabetes** – High blood sugar levels can cause changes in the lens.

**Eye injury or surgery** – Trauma or previous eye operations can trigger cataract formation.

**Certain medications** – Long-term use of steroids, for example, can increase the risk.

**Smoking and alcohol use** – These can speed up lens clouding.

**Excess sunlight exposure** – Ultraviolet (UV) rays can damage the proteins in the lens over time.



## What Are the Symptoms?

Cataracts usually develop slowly, so you might not notice changes right away. Common symptoms include:

- Blurry or cloudy vision
- Colors that seem faded or yellowed
- Difficulty seeing at night or in dim light
- Sensitivity to bright lights or glare
- Needing brighter light for reading or close work
- Seeing haloes around lights
- Frequent changes in your glasses or contact lens prescription

If you notice these changes, it's a good idea to visit your optometrist for an eye examination.

## How Are Cataracts Diagnosed?

Your optometrist can check for cataracts during a comprehensive eye exam. They'll look at your vision, measure how well you see at different distances, and examine the inside of your eye using a special microscope. Sometimes, your pupils may be dilated (made larger) with eye drops so an eye doctor can see inside the pupil more clearly.



Anaesthesia



Cataract extraction



Intraocular lens implantation



Final result

## Can Cataracts Be Treated?

In the early stages, you may not need treatment right away. A new glasses prescription, brighter lighting, or using magnifiers might help you see better for a while.

When cataracts begin to interfere with daily activities—such as reading, driving, or recognizing faces—**the best treatment is cataract surgery**. This is one of the most common and safest surgeries performed worldwide. During the procedure, the cloudy lens is removed and replaced with a clear artificial lens called an intraocular lens (IOL). Vision usually improves quickly, within a day or so.



## Can Cataracts Be Prevented?

While cataracts can't always be avoided, you can take steps to help protect your eyes:

- **Wear sunglasses with UV protection when outdoors.**
- **Eat a balanced diet rich in fruits and vegetables, especially those high in vitamins C and E.**
- **Quit smoking and limit alcohol use.**
- **Manage health conditions such as diabetes.**
- **Have regular eye exams, especially after age 40, so any changes can be caught early.**

## In Summary

A cataract is a clouding of the eye's natural lens that causes blurred or dim vision. It's a common part of aging, but modern eye care offers simple, safe, and effective treatment. If you notice changes in your sight, don't ignore them—see your optometrist. Early detection and proper care can help keep your vision clear and your eyes healthy for years to come.