

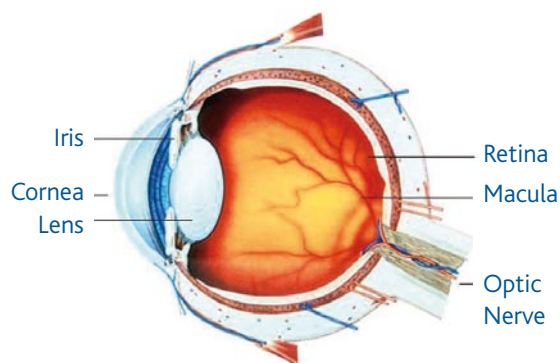
Cataract

A cataract is a cloudy area on the eye's lens, formed when protein in the lens is damaged and clumps together. The clouding limits the amount and clarity of light passing through the lens to the retina, causing poor vision.

There are three forms of cataract:

- > 'Cortical' cataracts affect the outer lens.
- > 'Nuclear' cataracts affect the central area of the lens.
- > 'Posterior subcapsular' cataracts affect the back surface of the lens.

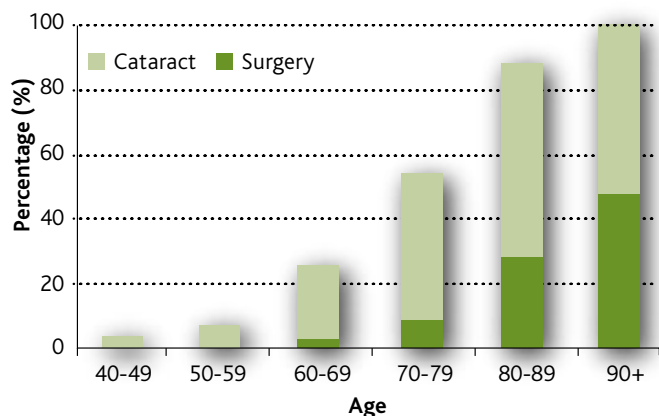
Cataracts usually develop slowly and at a different rate in each eye.



How common is cataract?

Due to its association with ageing, eventually everyone will develop cataract to some degree, if they live long enough. By the age of 80 almost all of us will have some degree of cataract formation.

More than 180,000 cataract operations are performed every year.



What are the symptoms?

- > Blurred vision
- > Sensitivity to light (glare)
- > Reduced night vision
- > Fading or 'yellowing' of colours

What are the causes?

Most cataracts develop as part of the ageing process. Long-term and unprotected exposure to UV sunlight, smoking, diabetes and a family history are among increased risk factors for developing cataract.

Can I prevent cataract?

Wearing sunglasses to protect from prolonged direct exposure to UV sunlight, and not smoking, may assist to prevent the early development of cataract.

What treatment is available?

Your ophthalmologist will advise if your cataract should be removed. Cataract may only be removed by surgery, usually performed under a local anaesthetic. A small incision is made and the cataractous lens is removed. It is replaced with a small plastic intraocular lens.

Surgery usually requires no stitches and visual recovery typically occurs within days. Once a cataract is removed it cannot redevelop.

Corneal research

The Corneal Research Unit at the Centre for Eye Research Australia is working on improved and new surgical techniques and on non-surgical treatment options for eye diseases that can lead to corneal transplants. Professor Rasik Vajpayee who heads this unit is an internationally acclaimed cornea, cataract and refractive surgeon. Information on work in progress is regularly updated at www.cera.org.au

To support our diseases of the cornea research with a donation, please call (TOLL FREE) 1300 737 757.