**Causes of eye cancer**

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There are no definitive causes of eye cancers.

However, there are certain risk factors that are associated with eye cancers. Individuals with these traits are more prone to develop these cancers.

There is however no direct association with these risk factors. This means that all those who have these risk factors may not develop eye cancers. Being aware of these factors, however, may help healthy lifestyle choices and avoidance of certain harmful exposures.

**Risk factors associated with Intraocular melanoma**

Intraocular melanoma is the commonest form of eye cancer. The commonly associated risk factors of this type of eye cancer are (1, 2, 3, 4):-

1. Race or ethnicity – Caucasians or whites are at a higher risk of [melanomas](https://www.news-medical.net/health/What-are-Melanomas.aspx) than African Americans or Asian Americans. Whites are also at a higher risk of skin melanomas. Eye melanomas follow a similar pattern in terms of risk association.
2. Age – Primary intraocular melanoma commonly occurs after the age of 50. It is rare in children and those who are over 70 years of age.
3. Sex – Eye melanoma affects both men and women with same frequency.
4. Colors of the eyes or iris – Those with light colored eyes have raised risk of intraocular melanoma. Among those blue, grey or green or any light eyed individuals are at higher risk than brown eyed individuals. The actual reason is unknown but it is speculated that the risk assessment is similar to whites being more prone to skin and eye melanomas.
5. Sun exposure – Too much sun exposure or exposure to ultraviolet (UV) rays (either from the sun or tanning beds) raises risk of skin melanomas. This is true especially in Caucasians and whites. There is no evidence however that this is true for eye melanomas but concerns that similar association might be true for eye melanomas.
6. Inherited conditions – Those with conditions like dysplastic nevus syndrome are at a higher risk of eye melanomas. These individuals have over 100 abnormal shaped and sized moles over their skin. Those with abnormal brown spots on the uvea called nevus of Ota are also at risk of getting eye melanomas. Nevi or moles around or within the eye also raise the risk of eye melanomas. Individuals with brown spots over the uvea in a condition called oculodermal melanocytosis are at a higher risk of eye melanomas as well. Eye melanomas may also be inherited and may run in some families.
7. Occupational hazards – Workers like farmers, fishermen, welders, or chemical and laundry workers have a greater risk of getting eye melanomas.

**Risk factors associated with other types of eye cancer**

1. People with weakened or suppressed immune system like those with acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS), those on anti-rejection drugs after an organ transplant or elderly are at greater risk of primary intraocular lymphoma.

Sometimes the risk of eye lymphoma is raised by infection with a bacteria called Chlamydophila psittaci. The bacteria is caught from infected domestic animals such as cats and birds. This leads lung infections and conjunctival inflammation or conjunctivitis. This bacteria is associated with adnexal malt lymphoma.

1. Risk of squamous cell cancer of the eyes also rises with depressed immunity. Those with HIV AIDS infection and on drugs that suppress the immunity are at higher risks.

Sometimes Human papilloma virus (HPV) may infect the eye causing squamous cell carcinoma of the eye. This virus is related to cancers of the cervix and mouth. Exposure to sun and UV rays also raises risk of this type of eye cancer.

1. Kaposi sarcoma of the eye occurs more commonly in people with HIV or AIDS. This tumor is rare.
2. Retinoblastoma – This type of eye cancer affects young children. The risk of this disease is carried in a faulty gene. This disease thus is inherited and leads to loss of vision or even death of the child if not detected and treated early.

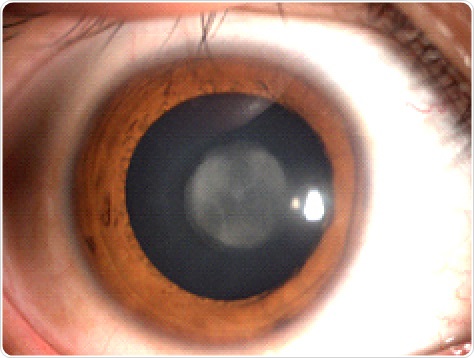
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# What are Cataracts?

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Cataracts are whitish or cloudy patches that develop in a person’s eye lens and lead to blurred or clouded vision. Cataracts are the most common cause of visual impairment worldwide.



Cataracts can develop in one or both eyes and interrupt the flow of light through the lens. The lens is usually transparent, allowing light to pass though to the retina at the back of the eye. Cataracts, however, cause the lens to become opaque and as the cataracts grow in size or number, vision gradually worsens, as less light is able to penetrate the lens.

## Eye anatomy

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The eye is composed of the following structures:

* Eyeball: This is filled with a jelly like material called the vitreous humour
* Conjunctiva: The thin lining covering the sclera (white of the eye)
* Cornea: The clear, transparent layer over the pupil that lets in light
* Lens: The transparent structure at the front of the eye through which light passes
* Retina: A thin nerve membrane located behind the lens that detects light passing into the eye. Nerves in the retina send signals to the brain via the optic nerve to create an image.
* Optic nerve: This carries the information from the retina to the brain so information can be interpreted into vision
* Sclera: The tough covering of the eyeball or the white of the eye
* Uvea: This is the vascular middle layer of the eye ball made up of the iris, the ciliary body and the chorid
* Orbit: This is the cavity that houses the eyeball

## Symptoms and risk factors

One of the earliest symptoms of cataracts is blurred vision. The cloudier the lens becomes, the more sight is impaired, until vision in the affected eye is lost altogether. There is usually no pain associated with the condition.

Cataracts usually affect the elderly but children and infants may also be affected by special forms of cataracts. Some of the other risk factors associated with cataracts include smoking, a history of cataracts in the family, poor diet, overexposure of the eyes to sunlight, long-term use of steroids and diabetes.

## Treatment

For mild cataracts, high power glasses and brighter reading lights may help. As the condition progresses however, the eye may need to be operated on. Surgery is one of the most popular and most effective treatment options in cataract therapy. The operation involves removal of the affected lens, which is replaced with an artificial lens.

# Glaucoma Symptoms

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There are several types of glaucoma and all of them are characterized by raised intraocular pressure.

Symptoms of different types of glaucoma include:-

## Chronic open-angle glaucoma

In this type of glaucoma there is usually no overt symptoms at least in the initial stages. The condition progresses slowly. Damage to sight also takes longer to occur.

In this type of glaucoma the visual field is affected first. The peripheral vision goes before the central vision. Vision is lost from the outer rim of the eye, slowly working inwards towards the centre.

## Acute angle-closure glaucoma

This condition is rarer and may progress rapidly. During a severe attack the symptoms may be acute or sudden onset. There is intense eye pain, redness of the eyes, severe headache, and tenderness around the eyes, halos or rainbow like pattern around lights in the vision, blurred vision, and quickly progressing loss of vision in one or both eyes. There may be associated nausea and vomiting.

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The acute attack may last from one or two hours before disappearing again. But each time the symptoms occur the vision is damaged to a greater extent. Acute angle closure glaucoma attacks are a medical emergency.

## Secondary glaucoma

This is usually a result of eye injuries or other eye diseases like uveitis. Uveitis often causes painful eyes and headaches and similarly features of secondary glaucoma include those for the eye disease that has given rise to it in the first place. Blurred vision, rings or halos around lights, reduced field of vision etc. are common findings seen in secondary glaucomas.

## Congenital or Developmental glaucoma

This type of glaucoma occurs in a baby or in a child. It is often difficult to recognize this type of glaucoma. Physical symptoms include large eyes in the baby. This is caused due to expansion of the eyes due to raised ocular pressure.

The baby is sensitive to light (photophobia) and tends to cry or wince in bright lights. The eyes appear cloudy and watery and the movements are jerky. Some babies with congenital glaucoma may also develop squints or cross eyes where the alignment of the eyeballs is altered.