

A cataract is a clouding of the eye's lens that occurs as part of the natural aging process. The lens is normally clear and helps focus light, but as people age, the proteins in the lens break down and clump together, causing it to become cloudy. This clouding can make it difficult for light rays to pass through the lens and reach the retina, which is a thin layer of nerve tissue at the back of the eye that's sensitive to light.

National Eye Institute

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Cataracts are a part of the natural aging process where the lens in the eye becomes cloudy...

Cataracts can affect one or both eyes, and they can be present without causing any problems in the early stages. However, over time, cataracts can make vision blurry, hazy, or less colorful, and can make it difficult to read or perform other everyday activities. Other symptoms include:

Sensitivity to light and glare

Seeing double

Seeing halos around lights, especially at night

Objects appearing brown or yellow

Risk factors for cataracts include:

Family history of cataracts

Diabetes

Smoking

Long-term use of corticosteroid medicines

Unprotected exposure to ultraviolet (UV) radiation

Higher alcohol consumption

Low levels of antioxidants, such as vitamin C, vitamin E, and carotenoids

Cataracts aren't harmful in themselves and don't necessarily mean that someone will go blind, but surgery can be used to remove them and replace the cloudy lens with an artificial lens called an intraocular lens (IOL).