What is a Cataract?

The symptoms and treatment of cataracts

What is a cataract?
A cataract is a clouding of the natural lens inside your eye. This lens, located behind the iris, works just like the lens of a camera: focusing light images on the retina, which sends images to the brain. The human lens can become so clouded it keeps light and images from reaching the retina. Cataracts are the leading cause of visual loss in adults 55 and older.

What are the symptoms of cataracts?
A cataract can cause images to become blurred and bright colors to become dull. It can also make seeing at night more difficult. Vision with cataracts is often described as seeing through an old, cloudy film. Is your vision blurry or foggy? Do colors appear dull or muted? Are your glasses no longer working? Does sunlight or other light seem overly bright or glaring? Do you have decreased night vision or see halos around lights? If you answered “yes” to any of these questions, you may have cataracts.

When is the best time to treat cataracts?
Many people believe cataracts have to be “ripe” before they can be removed. This is no longer true. Today, cataract surgery can be performed as soon as your vision interferes with the quality of your life.

What does cataract surgery entail?
Cataract surgery is generally a simple, outpatient procedure with little discomfort. First, you will be given an anesthetic to numb the nerves in and/or around the eye. The procedure involves making a tiny incision in the eye. The surgeon then inserts a small instrument into the eye to break up the cloudy lens with ultrasound technology and remove it from the eye. Once the cataract is removed, a new, artificial lens is inserted through the same incision.

What should I expect after the surgery?
Our outpatient ambulatory surgery center allows patients to return home the very same day as surgery. You may be prescribed eye drops to prevent against infection, to reduce swelling, and to help your eye heal. You may need to wear eye shields for a few days following surgery. Most patients see well within a few days of recovery, though your vision may continue to improve for several days or weeks.

What is an IOL?
An IOL is an Intraocular Lens. This is the new, artificial lens that replaces the cloudy lens.

Will I still have to wear glasses or contact lenses following surgery?
Depending on your individual needs and the intraocular lens you choose, you may still need to wear glasses or contact lenses following cataract surgery.

Questions? Call Carolina Eye Associates Information Services at 910.255.2095 or 800.733.9355
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