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CATARACT

The word cataract comes from the Latin: Cataracta which means waterfall, describing how clear water becomes white or cloudy when rushing downward. The term "cataractous lens" was eventually shortened to "cataract."

A cataract is not something new.....it is a normal aging change of the lens we were born with. The lens, which is located toward the front of the eye just behind the iris, which is the colored part of the eye, which has a central opening called the pupil. When we are young, the lens, which is about the size of an M&M or an aspirin tablet, is very clear and very flexible which allows us to focus very closely. As we get older, the lens gradually loses its flexibility and we can no longer focus up close. This happens to everyone sometime after the age of 40; the aging process also causes the lens to lose some of its clarity which initially causes poor night vision and eventually glare with sun, headlights, and when looking at a backlit subject. When clouding gets to the point that we are unable to do the visual tasks that we have to do [like driving at night for work or recreation] or what we want to do [like hobbies, reading or driving], the only solution is to remove the clouded area of the lens and replace it with an artificial lens, which is called an intraocular lens implant. Through state-of-the-art microsurgery the elastic "shell" or capsule of the lens is opened. Then the cloudy contents of the lens are removed, and an acrylic or silicone artificial lens is placed into this capsule where it is supported by the original structure that supported the original lens.

Frequently, as the cataract develops, it causes a change in the focus of the eye, usually making it more nearsighted. In this situation, a change in glasses or contact lenses will restore adequate vision and the need for surgery can be delayed. This is why a refraction or measurement for glasses is a necessary part of a cataract evaluation. We need not wait until the cataract is "ripe" or almost completely clouded, however, it is appropriate to remove the cataract whenever it interferes with your lifestyle and visual needs.

In this practice we perform the "no needle-no stitch" cataract removal procedure where the eye is anesthetized with drops and gel while the patient is thoroughly sedated. We offer standard, state-of-the art intraocular lenses, some of which correct astigmatism and allow a greatly reduced dependence on glasses.

This brief summary will be augmented by the literature and drawings used along with an extensive discussion of the procedure and options which will occur during your cataract evaluation appointment. An excellent source of information is the American Academy of Ophthalmology website: www.aao.org/eyesmart ;