

Professional Health & Fitness

Cataract removal restores youthful outlook

"If we live long enough, we all eventually get cataracts!" That's the word from Eye Institute surgeon, Dr Trevor Gray, who specialises in helping cataract patients painlessly regain the vision they had lost years before.

What are cataracts?
A cataract is a cloudiness of the eye's normally transparent lens inside the eye. As you age, the lens' normal protein structure deteriorates and leaves it increasingly opaque. Because light has to pass through this lens to produce sharp images, cataracts gradually and progressively blur vision.

Cataracts usually develop slowly over time, so you may not notice you have one. Signs of cataracts include: Problems with smudgy vision, difficulty reading, poor central vision, glare with night driving, double or multiple images, frequent changes in eyeglass prescription, and headaches.

Who gets cataracts? And why?

Cataracts come with age, so

eventually everyone will get them. 52 to 64 year olds have a 42 percent chance of having a cataract, and people 85 or older have a 95 percent chance.

Often, people with cataracts are otherwise quite healthy. However, cataracts can also result from eye injuries, medications, radiation, and diabetes. Occasionally, congenital defects

Cataracts are painlessly removed through a short and outpatient procedure done under local anaesthetic. Cataract removal is safe and offers more than a 99 percent chance of a good result.

can give infants and children cataracts.

Dr Gray says diabetes, smoking, and more exposure to UV light can contribute to patients developing cataracts as much as 10 years earlier than normal.

Cataracts that cause only minor visual changes may not need treatment, but early care has advantages with driving safety and avoiding falls when walking over uneven ground. Ultimately, when deteriorating vision limits

your work or lifestyle, it's time to consider surgery.

How are cataracts treated?

Modern cataract surgery is now the safest prosthetic operation known to man, and the most common operation in the Western World. Cataracts are painlessly removed through a short and outpatient procedure done under local anaesthetic. (Cata-

becomes a part of the eye, lasts forever and requires no special care. The new clear lens implant is also able to improve the natural focus of the eye. More than 95 percent of patients enjoy better than driving level of vision without glasses after routine cataract surgery. However, because the way your eyes work together is altered, it can take the brain

mally after a day, drive after two to three days, and exercise (vigorously) in two weeks.

Preventing cataracts

More research may determine whether diet, smoking, alcohol consumption or vitamin deficiencies affect cataract formation. However, anecdotal evidence suggests that a healthy lifestyle slows cataract development. Antioxidants may provide protection by reducing the free radicals that damage lens proteins. Wearing sunglasses that protect against UV light and limiting smoking and alcohol intake may also be helpful.

Even with a healthy lifestyle, we cannot keep our youthful bodies. But isn't it nice to know that eye surgeons can restore our youthful outlook?

Eye Institute Surgeons performing cataract procedures are

Dr Trevor Gray, Dr Bruce Hadden Dr Peter Hadden, Dr Nick Mantell, Dr Helen Danesh-Meyer, Dr Peter Ring, Dr Adam Watson.

Common misconceptions about cataracts

Cataracts are a filmy coating that is visible on the outside of the eye.

No - Cataracts develop inside the eye, in the lens behind the iris and pupil. They cannot be easily seen by the naked eye.

Cataracts are caused by overuse, so "resting" the eyes will prevent cataracts from getting worse.

No - Cataracts are caused by the natural deterioration over time of the lens of the eye, which makes it grow cloudy and turn yellow. Once noticed, cataracts can be monitored by an optometrist or eye specialist until vision starts to limit your enjoyment of life.

Cataracts can be fixed by laser surgery.

Not yet - The affected lens is painlessly removed through a small incision, and permanently replaced with a plastic lens.

Cataract removal is painful.

No - It is not. The procedure is usually performed by completely numbing the eye with anaesthetic jelly. No need for anaesthetic needles. No-needle anaesthesia makes it safer for those on blood thinning medication such as aspirin or warfarin. Also good for peace of mind.

After surgery, another cataract could grow in the old one's place.

No - Cataracts do not "regrow". Once the affected lens is fully removed, the plastic lens implant remains clear forever.

I won't need to wear glasses once my cataract is removed.

While all patients enjoy more natural focus

and clearer vision after routine cataract surgery, reading glasses are usually helpful. More than 95 percent are able to legally drive without glasses. Modern "premium" lenses are able to reduce dependency upon glasses (for distance and reading) significantly by providing convenient reading and driving vision.

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