

Facts & Myths About Cataract

MYTH: Only older Americans develop cataract

FACT: While cataract affects more than 24 million Americans age 40 and older, cataract can occur among young adults or children. Risk factors that may lead to getting cataract at a younger age include:

- Intense heat or long-term exposure to UV rays from the sun
- Certain diseases, such as diabetes
- Inflammation in the eye
- Hereditary influences
- Events before birth, such as German measles in the mother
- Long-term steroid use
- Severe long-term nearsightedness (myopia)
- Eye injuries
- Eye diseases
- Smoking

MYTH: Taking Vitamin E or Vitamin C can prevent cataract

FACT: Some research centers are studying the link between these vitamins and cataract prevention. However, it will be many years before the studies can determine if vitamin C or E actually reduces a person's risk of cataract. Until then, it's best not to take these vitamins in large doses unless they have been prescribed by your physician.

MYTH: The best time to have cataract surgery done is when it is first diagnosed.

FACT: Cataract removal is elective surgery, which means it is the patient's choice when to undergo the procedure. Most people need surgery when the cataract causes enough vision loss to interfere with work, play or other day-to-day tasks. You, your eye doctor, and family members should decide together when and if surgery is needed.

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Facts & Myths About Cataract—Continued

MYTH: Taking aspirin can prevent cataract

FACT: There are not enough facts or evidence to say whether aspirin prevents cataract. Aspirin in large doses can be harmful. Unless your doctor prescribes aspirin for an ailment, it's best to avoid taking this medication on a regular basis.

MYTH: Lasers are used to remove cataract

FACT: In cataract treatment, the clouded lens is surgically removed and then replaced with an artificial lens implant. If a patient has cataract in both eyes, separate surgeries are scheduled. Sometimes the membrane behind the implant may become cloudy after cataract surgery. Laser treatment then may be used to open up the cloudy membrane.

MYTH: Cataract can be treated with eye drops

FACT: Surgery is the only proven treatment for cataract. Cataract cannot be treated with medicines.

MYTH: Cataract surgery is dangerous

FACT: Cataract surgery is a delicate operation. Yet, it is one of the safest operations done today. More than 95% of surgeries are successful. Fewer than 5% of cases have complications such as inflammation, bleeding, infection and retinal detachment.

MYTH: It can take months to recover from cataract surgery

FACT: In many cases, patients often can see well enough to resume normal activities a few days after having cataract surgery. Your vision will continue to improve over the following weeks and months. However, if you have additional eye problems, such as glaucoma, your recovery time might take longer.

