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THE OPTICIANS

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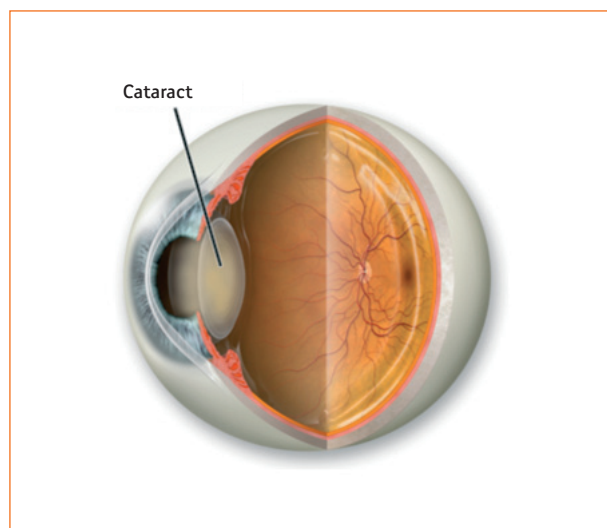
Cataracts

What is a cataract?

It is where the lens inside the eye becomes cloudy, making it difficult to see through.

What is the lens?

The lens is inside the eye directly behind the coloured part, called the iris. Little muscles are attached to the lens. These move, and by slightly altering its shape they help you focus on what you want to see.



What causes cataracts?

The most common cause is ageing, but occasionally they happen because of injury, or as a complication of other conditions.

What symptoms would I notice?

- Blurring of vision
- Seeing slightly double
- Difficulty with glare and bright lights

What can be done to help?

Anyone over the age of about 60 is likely to have a degree of cloudiness of the lens, but this does not cause any harm to the eye. If the cataract starts to prevent you from doing the things you want to, or need to do, such as driving, reading or watching TV, then an operation to remove it may be required.

What does the operation involve?

The operation takes about half an hour and is usually performed under local anaesthetic, so you are fully conscious, but the eye is numbed so you don't feel any pain. Most patients do not need to stay in hospital overnight.

During the operation the cloudy lens is removed and replaced with an artificial implant lens.

What happens after the operation?

It takes about 6 weeks for the eye to fully recover. After about 4 weeks it is usually necessary to visit your opticians to change your glasses to get the full benefit of the operation.

Are there any risks involved?

All operations carry some risks, and cataract surgery is no different. About 97% of people can see better afterwards, but in 2 to 3% of cases problems arise which may worsen vision. Usually the deterioration is minor. Very occasionally a serious complication can occur that can leave you with no sight in the operated eye, but thankfully nowadays this is quite rare.

Overall cataract surgery is very successful in improving most people's vision.