

HealthBreak

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Cataract Awareness



Cataracts are a clouding of the lenses in one or both of your eyes. As the clouding progresses, your vision deteriorates. Cataracts are the leading cause of blindness in the world. Here are answers to some of the frequently asked questions about cataracts.

Am I at risk of developing cataracts? The older you are, the more likely you are to develop cataracts. In fact, by age 80, more than half of all Americans either have cataracts or have had treatment for cataracts.

Besides aging, there are other things that may put you at risk for developing cataracts:

- Diabetes
- Smoking
- Drinking too much alcohol
- Too much exposure to sunlight

How are cataracts treated? When cataracts first start affecting your vision, brighter lighting, magnifying glasses and new glasses or sunglasses may help.

When your vision is affected to the point it interferes with normal activities like driving, using a computer or reading, your lens can be surgically replaced with an artificial one. This surgery is the only effective treatment for cataracts. Your doctor can help you decide when the time is right.

Can I do anything to prevent cataracts? Taking good care of your eyes by following these tips may help delay cataracts:

- Wear quality sunglasses and hats to block the ultraviolet rays of the sun.
- Eat plenty of fresh fruits and green leafy vegetables as part of a balanced eating plan.
- If you have diabetes, make sure it's well-managed.
- If you smoke, quit.
- If you drink, do so in moderation.
- See your eye care professional regularly.

Where can I learn more? The National Eye Institute is an accurate, reliable source of health information available in English and Spanish. Check it out at <http://www.nei.nih.gov/health/cataract/>.

Please visit excellusbcbs.com for more information about lifestyle changes you can make to improve your health.