

Cataracts

A cataract is a clouding of the clear lens in the eye. It occurs when proteins clump together, obstructing the transmission of light through the eye.

Causes:

- Ageing (senile cataract)
- Can be present at birth (congenital cataract)
- From disease (e.g. diabetes mellitus and thyroid disorders)
- Excessive use of drugs (e.g. steroids, smoking, excessive alcohol, consumption)
- Injury (e.g. trauma or exposure to excessive UV light)

Symptoms:

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| - Blurred vision |
| - Glare sensitivity |
| - Distortion or double vision in the affected eye |
| - Increased shortsightedness |

Treatment:

- Past: removal of whole lens, causing blindness
- New glasses
- Stronger bifocals
- Cataract surgery:
 - Incision made in the cornea
 - Ultrasound device breaks up the cloudy lens into small pieces, which are then gently removed from the eye with suction.
 - replacing the natural lens with an implant called an intraocular lens (IOL)

Risks:

- Inflammation
- Infection
- Bleeding
- Swelling
- Drooping eyelid
- Dislocation of artificial lens
- May require glasses

<i>Advantages</i>	<i>Disadvantages</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Improves vision- Cheap- Short surgery- Readily accessible	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Need to wear glasses- Few risks including infection

There is a lack of equity to access this type of technology as developed countries have increased access to cataract surgery than developing countries. People in developing countries cannot afford it and no access to doctors to perform the surgery.

Initiatives of the Fred Hollows foundation:

- Eradicate blindness in developing countries
- Reducing the cost of the surgery