



# Is Cataract Causing Your Cloudy or Fading Vision?

Cataract is the leading cause of low vision among Americans in general, and a leading cause of blindness among African Americans. Fortunately, cataract removal is one of the most common operations performed in the United States. It is also one of the safest and most effective types of surgery. In about 90 percent of cases, people who have cataract surgery have better vision afterward.

Most cataracts are related to aging. More than 17 percent of Americans aged 40 and older have cataract or have had cataract in the past. More than 20 million Americans aged 40 and older have cataract in one or both eyes. By 2020, the estimated number of people with cataract is expected to rise to more than 30 million. More than half of all Americans aged 80 and older have cataract. Risk factors for cataract include obesity, cigarette smoking, exposure to ultraviolet light, and alcohol consumption.

Cataract forms when the normally clear lens in one or both eyes becomes cloudy and prevents light from passing through to the retina. For most people, the first noticeable signs of cataract may include cloudy vision, glaring or abnormally high sensitivity to bright light, poor night vision, faded color vision, double or multiple vision in one eye, or frequent changes in prescriptions for eyeglasses or contact lenses. A comprehensive dilated eye examination by an eye care professional can determine whether a cataract or some other problem is causing loss of vision.

Replacing the clouded lens with a clear one is called for when cataract interferes with everyday activities, such as driving a car, reading, or watching TV. This surgery is performed nearly 3 million times a year in the United States, making it the most common surgical procedure today. And it is estimated that the Federal government spends more than \$3.4 billion each year for cataract treatment through the Medicare program.

For more information on cataract, visit the Healthy Vision 2010 Website at [www.healthyvision2010.org](http://www.healthyvision2010.org), sponsored by the National Eye Institute (NEI) and the Healthy Vision Consortium.

The NEI conducts and supports research that leads to sight-saving treatment and plays a key role in reducing visual impairment and blindness. The NEI is part of the National Institutes of Health (NIH), an agency of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.