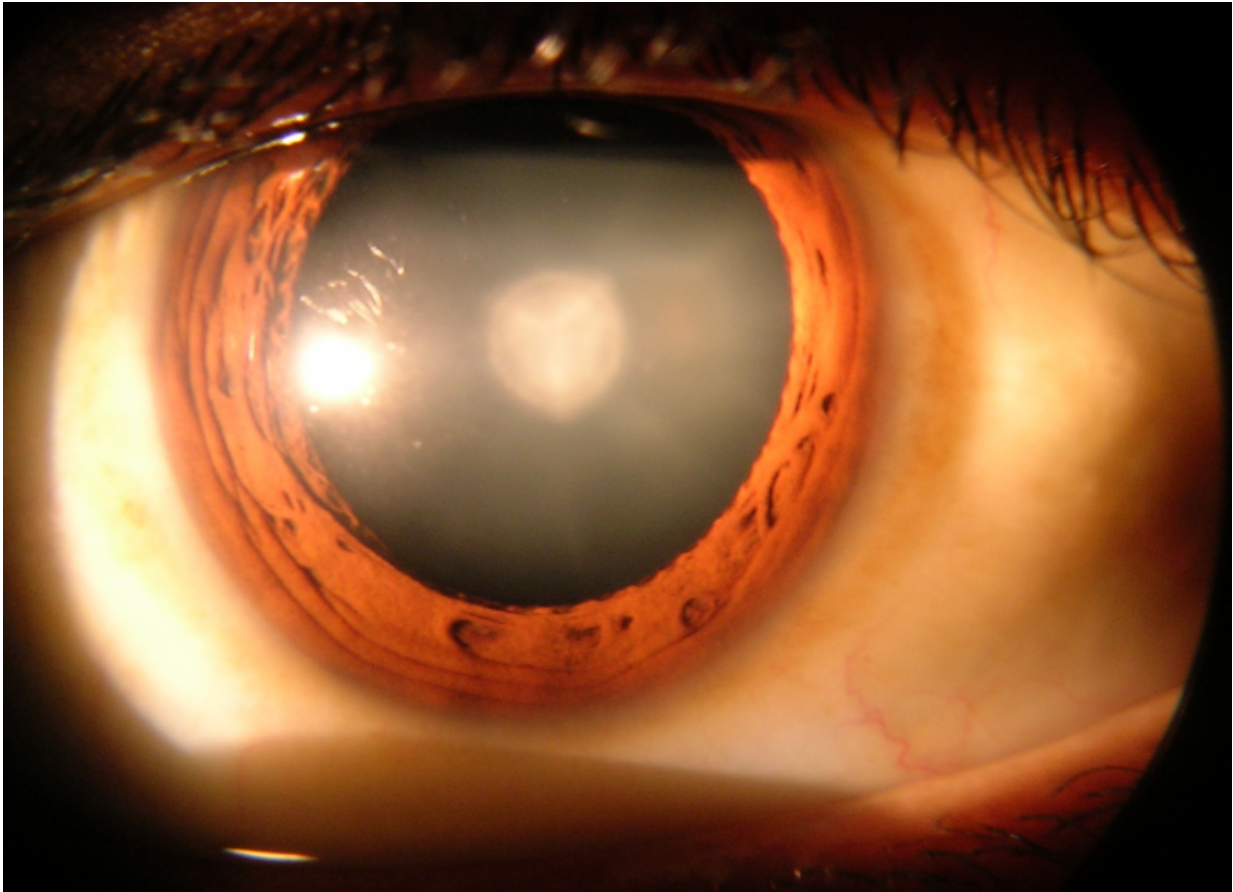


Q&A: When can cataract surgery wait?

June 12 2019, by From Mayo Clinic News Networks Network



Cataract in human eye. Credit: Wikipedia.

Dear Mayo Clinic: I was just diagnosed with a cataract, but it's not bothering me at all. Is it a good idea to have cataract surgery now, or can I wait? What is the recovery from this surgery like?

A: It's not uncommon for a cataract to develop slowly, so you may not notice [vision problems](#) right away or the problems may be minimal. Eventually, the cataract will begin to obscure your eyesight, making images blurry, clouded or dim. But if your [vision](#) hasn't yet been affected, there's no harm in putting off [cataract surgery](#) for now.

A cataract occurs when the naturally clear [lens](#) inside your eye becomes cloudy. The lens is positioned behind the colored part of your eye, called the iris. It focuses light that passes into your eye, producing clear, sharp images on the retina. Normally, the eye's lens is transparent and clear. Once symptoms develop, having cataracts is like looking through a dirty or foggy windshield: You may still be able to drive, but the more compromised your view is, the greater your risk of an accident. Fortunately, surgery to remove cataracts is generally safe and highly effective. In almost all cases, cataract surgery is an outpatient procedure that takes around 20 minutes. During the procedure, an eye surgeon removes the clouded lens and replaces it with a plastic lens implant. The replacement lens sits in the same place your natural lens had been. This artificial lens is durable and never needs to be replaced in most cases. Cataract surgery clears vision in about 95% of cases. In addition to correcting the cataract, the [artificial lens](#) placed during cataract surgery often can correct distance or close-up vision, if needed. However, you still may need vision correction with glasses or contact lenses for close-up work, distance or both.

After surgery, your surgeon places a shield and patch on your eye. These need to remain in place for less than 24 hours. Once the [patch](#) and shield are removed, most people can return to many of their usual activities. One common reason people consider [cataract](#) surgery is to improve their vision so they can still drive safely. A 2018 study of people with cataracts in both eyes found that participants who had [surgery](#) on one eye reduced their risk of car crashes by 61%, compared with the year before the procedure. But car accidents aren't the only risk. Research shows that

cataracts increase the risk of falls. Surgery improves clarity, color perception and brightness, and helps with night vision. When you feel that the cataracts are limiting your vision or your ability to perform normal activities, such as reading or driving at night, talk with your health care provider. He or she can discuss with you the benefits and risks of the procedure. To keep your eyes healthy, see your eye care professional regularly. Detecting cataracts and other eye problems early often ensures that you get the most effective treatment. Ask your [health care provider](#) to help you determine an appropriate schedule for eye exams.

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