Cataract

Cataracts are opacities of the lens that develop gradually over time. These are age-related and are typically painless. When examining patients we see a cloudy, opaque lens, which leads to decreased visual acuity. The definitive treatment for cataracts is surgery.



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Mechanism

Age-related
Older Adult
There is no specific cause for cataract development, but rather it is because of the aging process. Some forms of cataracts can be secondary to congenital defects, injury, or from another eye disease (rubella, UV exposure, corticosteroids).

Assessment

No Pain
No Pain-bolts sign
Typically, cataracts develop insidiously because these are painless. Patients do not complain of any eye-related pain.

Cloudy Opaque Lens
Cloudy Opaque Eyes
When assessing a patient, we see a cloudy, opaque lens that can be described as milky. A totally opaque lens creates the appearance of a white pupil.

Decreased Visual Acuity
Down-arrow Eye Accuracy
The patient with cataracts may complain of a decrease in vision, abnormal color perception, and glare. Glare is due to light scatter caused by the lens opacities, and can be significantly worse at night when the pupil dilates that leads to a decrease in night vision.

Occurs Gradually
Gradual Decline
The development of cataracts are gradual, as is the loss in vision in patients. The rate of cataract development varies with the individual.

Treatment

Surgery
Surgeon
Surgical removal of the lens is the best treatment for cataracts. The lens is removed completely and replaced with an intraocular lens implant. This is performed one eye at a time.

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