

## *HOW TO SLOW CATARACT DEVELOPMENT*

Most cataracts are first noticed by people who are over 60 years of age, though they may have had the cataract for several years before it actually becomes bothersome. Cataracts are caused by a “clumping together” of proteins in the lens of the eye.

People are at more risk for cataract development if they have diabetes, if they smoke or drink alcohol, if they have been exposed to some types of radiation, if they have used steroids, if they have suffered an eye injury, or had prior eye surgery.

The common symptoms of a developing cataract include:

- Cloudy or blurred vision
- Increased sensitivity to headlights, or sunlight
- More difficulty seeing at night
- Seeing a “halo” around lights
- Double vision

These may also be symptoms of other eye problems, so it is important to see a doctor if any of these symptoms are noticed.

During the early stages of cataract development, changes in the prescriptions of glasses and various aids, such as magnifying glasses, are of assistance in controlling the effects of the disease. When these measures are no longer effective, surgery to remove the damaged lens and replace it with an artificial lens is necessary.

Cataract removal is one of the most common surgeries performed in the United States and more than 90% of those procedures result in improved vision for the patient.

To help protect against or slow cataract development, the National Eye Institute recommends:

- Wearing sunglasses and wide brimmed hats to protect the eyes from ultra-violet light
- STOP SMOKING
- Eat lots of green leafy vegetables, and fruits rich in antioxidants



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- **Have regular eye exams—if over 60, have a comprehensive exam, including dilation, at least every two years.**

[SOURCE: The website of the National Eye Institute  
—easily accessible in the Health and Medical section of VITAL CONNECTIONS  
<<http://www.vitalco.net>>]

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