

# Cataract Treatment And Surgery

A Comprehensive Guide



Southwestern  
EYE CENTER®

[www.sweye.com](http://www.sweye.com)

# Cataract Treatment and Surgery

If you suffer from cloudy or foggy vision, you might have a condition known as cataracts. In this case, we recommend that you work with an eye doctor to restore your vision before the condition gets worse.

This helpful guide will allow you to make informed decisions as you consider if cataract surgery is right for you. As you read through this guide, you will learn how to complete a self-evaluation of your symptoms, obtain a [medical](#) diagnosis, decide on the right type of surgery, and learn what to expect during and after your procedure. It will help you anticipate the associated costs and identify the clinic that's right for your individual needs.

We hope that this guide will equip you with the essential information you need to treat your cataracts from start to finish and empower you to choose the right eye clinic provider such as Southwestern Eye Center.

Cataracts are a common eye condition that affects the lens of the eye. Over time the lens becomes cloudy, generally with a yellowish tint and is much like looking through a foggy window. Patients with cataracts often report difficulties seeing clearly at night, driving, or reading. In some cases, cataracts might cause the formation of proteins to clump in the eye, causing distortion of vision rather than just faded. Cataracts typically take years to form and can show up on any portion of the lens.



## Types of Cataracts

Senile cataracts are the most common type of cataract and usually occur as people grow older. In most cases, the cataracts that occur in younger patients originate from the back part of the lens.

Secondary cataracts are another type of cataract and result from a variety of conditions, such as: diabetes, glaucoma surgery, radiation eye injury, or a negative reaction to certain medications. For example, a diabetic person may be at-risk for diabetic retinopathy, and cataracts are a secondary condition.





## Diagnosing Cataracts

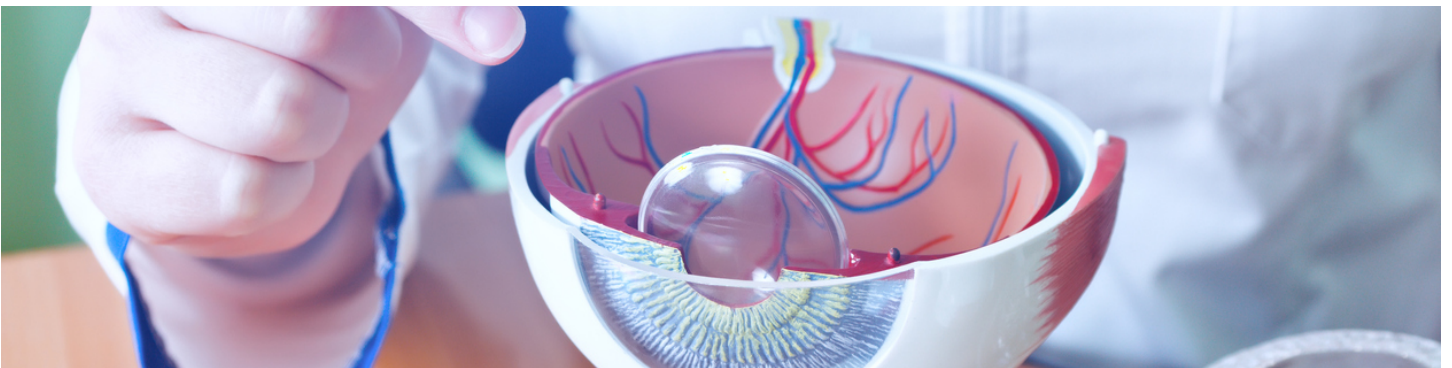
By the time you're ready to schedule an appointment with an eye doctor, it's likely that you've already noticed a problem in your vision. While you may have been functioning for years with impaired vision, the persisting problem and increased effect on your daily activities might have motivated you to obtain a professional opinion and official diagnosis. Here are some of the most common symptoms of cataracts which indicate it's time to seek an assessment from an eye doctor:

- Blurred or faded vision
- Trouble seeing clearly at night
- Excessive glare from light
- Seeing halos around light sources
- Things you look at seem yellow
- Double vision
- Frequent prescription changes

## Diagnostic Tests

When you visit your eye doctor for possible cataracts, you can expect them to perform a number of tests to assess your vision. Your doctor will assess your entire eye health and dilate your eyes. If your doctor is also an eye surgeon, they will be able to speak to you about whether you are a good candidate for cataract surgery.

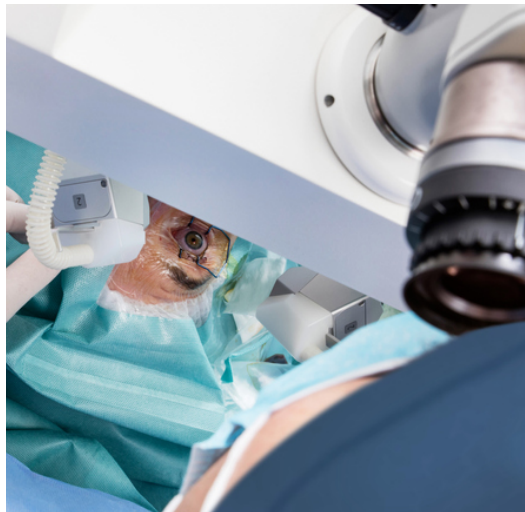
Cataract surgery is considered to be one of the most accurate and successful procedures performed in medicine today.



## Determining Your Eligibility for Surgery

The majority of people will eventually develop cataracts as they age; however, not everyone will be a good candidate for treatment. Since cataract is a slowly progressing condition, those who still see well and only have minor visual impairments will likely not need surgery. Before you visit a surgeon, take a moment to review our cataract self-evaluation checklist and make some notes about your expectations for your vision post surgery. Today, a high number of patients have excellent vision after cataract surgery, decreasing reliance on glasses.

It's possible that when you first receive a diagnosis, your doctor might decide to watch the progression of your cataracts while managing your symptoms. This can include a new prescription for your glasses, anti-glare sunglasses, or adjustments to bright lighting surroundings. If none of these temporary solutions are effective, it's likely time to consider cataract surgery.



## Arranging to Have Cataract Surgery

Once your doctor recommends that you have cataract surgery, there are several steps to ensure that your process is seamless and as comfortable as possible. You'll need to work with an optometrist to test the severity of your condition. At that time, your provider will discuss next steps with you and answer any questions you might have about the process and what you can expect. If your provider is not also a cataract surgeon, you'll need to arrange a consultation to review the actual surgery components of your operation and recovery.

Your doctor will test your vision and analyze the shape of your cornea to determine which lens they recommend for you. They will also determine if you are healthy enough to have the procedure.





# Laser Cataract Surgery

Laser cataract surgery is a process that allows the surgeon to use a femtosecond computer-guided laser to create the initial incisions by which to remove the lens. This laser improves precision and predictability during the most challenging and delicate parts of cataract surgery. There is also evidence that suggests the laser is better at managing astigmatism, irregular shape of cornea than a human. This level of advanced precision in the lens removal process means that the surgeon can move quickly to the next part of the surgery, which is replacing the clouded lens with a basic or advanced technology lens.



## ORA (Optiwave Refractive Analysis)

ORA technology provides the surgeon with a precise analysis of your eye during surgery. This measurement is not possible with conventional instruments and allows the surgeon to address lens selection in real time to make other immediate decisions regarding astigmatism. ORA works by using a low intensity beam of light, reflected on the back of the patient's eye just before the insertion of the artificial lens (IOL). Sensors in the ORA device then analyze the reflected wave of light exiting the eye.

## Preparing for Cataract Surgery

Once you've made the decision to move forward with cataract surgery, you'll need to take several steps in preparation. If you currently wear contact lenses, your doctor may ask you to avoid wearing them for a few days or even a few weeks, allowing your eye lenses to regain their original shape. You might also be advised to not eat for a certain number of hours before the procedure. You should plan on arranging a ride home as you will be unable to drive yourself following the procedure.

## The Day of the Surgery

Cataract surgery typically takes less than 15 minutes and is completed using sedation (and sometimes) local anesthesia. When you arrive at the surgery center, a health professional will clean the area around your eyes and administer eye drops to dilate your pupils. Most people remain awake during the procedure, but the nerves around the eye are anesthetized to eliminate pain and reduce movement.



## Recovery and Complications

After the surgery is complete, you can expect to rest in a designated area for a few minutes. Your eye will be covered to protect it. A staff member will review post surgery instructions including information on how to administer your eye drops. These eye drops significantly decrease the chance of infection and speed up the natural healing process. Your eye might feel irritated or tender, but it is important not to rub your eyes. You're permitted to wear your glasses as needed.

Once you arrive home, you should plan on resting and keeping your activity light for a few days to reduce the possibility of complications. For the first week following surgery, you'll need to refrain from the following activities:

- Bending at the waist
- Exercise that involves straining or lifting more than 25lbs
- Swimming or sitting in a pool, lake, ocean, or hot tub

You should expect to follow-up with an appointment the day after surgery so your doctor can examine the eyes, evaluate the vision, check the eye pressure, and conduct other testing as needed. You should expect at least 2-3 more visits following that as your eye heals. Most people will notice an improvement in their vision within a few days.

## Common Complications

Like any surgery, cataract surgery has potential complications that you should be aware of. The most common complications from cataract surgery include nausea, vomiting, infection, inflammation, bleeding, double vision, or loss of vision. Although these complications are rare, your risk increases if you have other underlying eye problems. If you experience any of these problems, you should alert your eye doctor immediately so they can assess your situation and offer you instruction.

## Secondary Cataracts

One less-common, but possible, complication resulting from cataract surgery is a so-called “secondary cataract.” According to the [American Academy of Ophthalmology](#), this isn’t a true cataract and is simply a result of the tissue behind the lens (IOL) becoming wrinkled or cloudy. This occurs in 15-30% of patients following cataract surgery and is treated with a painless one minute laser treatment.

A 2011 study in the journal [Clinical Ophthalmology](#) analyzed the prevalence of secondary cataracts and found that those who had congenital or trauma-induced cataracts were more likely to develop secondary cataracts, when compared to those who developed other complications resulting from cataract surgery.

## Cost/Insurance Coverage

One of the biggest concerns patients have when considering cataract surgery is how to pay for it. Fortunately most insurance companies consider it a medically necessary operation, including Medicare. However, it’s important like any surgery to plan ahead and obtain pre approval from your insurance company as they might have specific requirements before they will cover the procedure. You may discover that only certain portions of the lens replacement may be covered. Insurance will usually pay for a basic intraocular lens (IOL) if there aren’t any other problems that affect your eye health. Typically, your insurance or healthcare service plan will pay for the outpatient surgery center fee, the cost of anesthesia, and the surgeon’s fee for surgery, less any deductible or copay requirements.

Advanced vision technology options are not currently covered by insurance. If you find that your coverage is not adequate for your entire procedure, talk to your eye health provider about different payment options they might employ to make your surgery accessible and affordable.



## Success Rates and Patient Satisfaction

Cataract surgery has a high satisfaction rate because it's successful at improving patient vision with little pain and recovery time. According to a 2012 analysis in [Investigative Ophthalmology & Visual Science](#), most patients felt the process was effective, predictive, and safe.

Many patients even experienced added benefits. A 2015 study in the [Journal of Epidemiology](#) showed that cataract surgery is associated with better sleep. Researchers believe that this is due to the eye's retina receiving more light during the day, which promotes better sleep.

Although you might be worried about the procedure, cataract surgery is quite common and most people who have the procedure are glad that they did it. During your research, be sure to take a moment to read patient testimonials. This should offer you more confidence about having the procedure yourself, particularly at your clinic of choice.



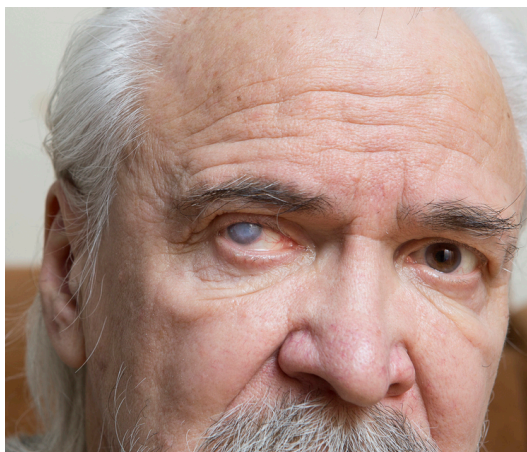
## Selecting a Clinic

Before you schedule your cataract surgery, it's important that you find a provider that will address your needs in an efficient and professional way while also providing you the best care possible. If you have trusted friends and family who have had the procedure, ask for their thoughts. If they had a positive experience with their clinic or surgeon, you'll feel more confident as you choose a provider of your own.

Once you have the information for a few clinics, it's a good idea to call or visit their website for more information. Be sure to select a doctor who has been certified by the American Board of Ophthalmology, has proven experience with the surgery, and who uses the latest technological advancements in cataract surgery. It's a good idea to also select a provider who offers comprehensive eye care as well. That way, they're prepared to help you with your follow up care for years to come. Location might also be a factor in your decision as you'll have several appointments related to surgery, so it helps to have a clinic nearby to make it convenient for the person you choose to help transport you.

We know that there is a lot to think about when you're considering cataract surgery and we want you to know you're in good hands from the very beginning. When you're ready to put your cataract problems behind you and dramatically improve your sight, contact the experts at Southwestern Eye Center for professional eye care. Keep this checklist handy as you research prospective clinics:

- What are the surgeon's credentials and experience with cataract surgery?
- Am I treated with courtesy and respect by clinic staff members?
- Are there trained staff or doctors available to answer my questions?
- What should I do if there are complications post-surgery?
- Is the nearest clinic location convenient for me?
- Can the clinic provide comprehensive eye care for me?





[www.sweye.com](http://www.sweye.com)



