



Cataract Awareness Month

More than half of all Americans will develop cataracts by the age of 80. The good news is that you don't have to live with cataracts! Thanks to technological advances and the availability of new procedures in the US, most Americans will not suffer vision loss or other visual problems as a result of cataracts.

A cataract is a clouding of the lens in the eye. The clouding blocks light from reaching the retina, preventing a person from seeing clearly and accurately. Cataracts vary in size and can occur in one or both eyes. They are not painful and cannot spread from one eye to the other. The bigger the cataract, the more likely it is to affect vision. Protecting your eyes from ultraviolet sunlight may help to slow the development of cataracts.



Cataracts can cause blurry vision.
Photo: National Eye Institute, National Institutes of Health

Unfortunately, there is no medication or therapy available to treat the symptoms. Cataract surgery, the most frequently performed surgical procedure in the US, is the only treatment for cataracts. The surgery is usually performed as an outpatient procedure under local anesthesia. It also is 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.

If you have cataracts, but they do not interfere with your day-to-day life, treatment may not be necessary. Maintain an open dialogue with your Primary Care Provider and Eye Care Specialist to track the development of cataracts or if you are considering surgery.

Remember, an annual preventive eye exam performed by an eye care professional and cataract treatments are covered benefits for US Family Health Plan members. Check our website (www.usfhp.net) or contact Member Services for a listing of network providers.

Many of the symptoms people experience when they have cataracts are also common for other conditions. Be sure to check with your doctor if you experience any of the following:

- Blurry vision
- Double vision
- Fading or yellowing of colors
- Sensitivity to glare or bright light
- Trouble driving at night

For further information, check out the resources below:

Cataract Information from Medline Plus

<http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/cataract.html>

Interactive tutorials from Medline Plus

<http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/tutorials/cataracts/htm/index.htm>

Cataract Information from the National Institutes of Health

http://www.nei.nih.gov/health/cataract/cataract_facts.asp