

Cataract

WHAT IS A CATARACT? The natural lens is the structure located behind the iris or the colored part of the eye. The lens focuses light onto the macula, the portion of the retina responsible for central vision. Over time the natural lens becomes cloudy, hazy, or not clear. When the natural lens is no longer clear, it is called a cataract. Cataracts can develop from normal aging, an eye injury, or prolonged use of certain medications. Almost all individuals older than 65 years-old have cataracts. The majority of cataracts cause significant visual symptoms. Blurry vision, dulled vision, sensitivity to light, glare, ghost images, or halos, are all symptoms caused by cataracts.

HOW WILL CATARACT REMOVAL AFFECT MY VISION? The goal of cataract surgery is to correct the decreased vision and other symptoms that are caused by the cataract. During the surgery, Dr. Alessio removes the cataract and replaces it with a new artificial lens called an intraocular lens or IOL. Cataract surgery will not correct other causes of decreased vision, such as glaucoma, diabetes, or age-related macular degeneration.

IS CATARACT SURGERY RIGHT FOR ME? If you are unhappy with the quality of your vision and you are willing to have a surgery to make your vision better, you may benefit from cataract surgery. Because cataracts develop slowly and usually in both eyes, you may not realize how much your vision has been affected. Once the lens in the eye becomes cloudy, hazy, and discolored, the quality of your vision diminishes. This can affect reading, driving, and your overall safety. By having your cataract removed, you can expect improved vision and you will be able to return to your normal daily activities soon after. Most people will notice a significant enhancement in colors, contrast, and clarity of images. You may choose not to have your cataract removed, but your vision will likely continue to get worse. The only treatment available for cataracts is surgical removal.

IS CATARACT SURGERY RISKY OR DANGEROUS? Modern cataract and intraocular lens implant surgery is one of the miracles of modern medicine. The great majority are successful and patients are pleased with their improved vision. Precautions are taken to prevent potential complications such as infection, inflammation, swelling, and increased pressure in the eye.

WHAT CAN I EXPECT DURING CATARACT SURGERY? Light sedation is used to relax you and your eye is numbed with a local anesthetic. You may see a bright light and feel pressure in your eye. State of the art cataract surgery is not painful. All precautions are taken to see that your experience is pleasant and comfortable.

HOW LONG WILL THE SURGERY TAKE? The answer is “as long as it takes to do a safe and good job”. On average, modern cataract surgery takes approximately 10 minutes of actual surgery time.

WHAT IS THE INTRAOCULAR LENS (IOL) MADE OF? Most IOLs are made of either silicone or acrylic. Implant materials have been used for many years and have been exceptionally well tolerated by tens of millions of patients. IOLs do not wear out or need replacement. They will last multiple lifetimes.

WHAT TYPES OF CATARACT SURGERY ARE AVAILABLE?

STANDARD CATARACT SURGERY - Dr. Alessio uses blades to make your incisions. He will manually open the cataract’s capsule and relies on the sole use of ultrasound energy to soften the cataract so that it can be extracted. The dependence on the need for glasses may be necessary after standard cataract surgery.

LASER CATARACT SURGERY - Dr. Alessio uses a femtosecond laser, in a customized fashion, to prepare the eye for the cataract to be removed. Crucial steps that the laser would perform include: incisions, opening of the capsule, softening of the cataract and correcting astigmatism. The use of the laser, in this fashion, is not covered by medical insurance and therefore carries significant out of pocket costs.

WHAT IS MONOVISION? Monovision is using one eye for near vision and the other eye for distance. Monovision is a method used to reduce the need for glasses after surgery. Monovision is a good option for someone who already uses monovision in the form of contact lenses or refractive surgery.

WHAT ARE MY RESTRICTIONS AFTER SURGERY? Minimal. You can go out and resume most of your normal activities the day after surgery. Most people are legal to drive the day following surgery. It is recommended to avoid heavy lifting (over 30 pounds) and strenuous exercise the first 3 days after surgery. Never rub or massage the eye in the immediate post-operative period. Any specific physical activities in question should be addressed directly by Dr. Alessio.

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