

# CATARACTS



Dr. Andy Baldus

**Cataracts** are a common age-related vision problem and the older a person gets the greater the risk for developing cataracts. Women are more likely to develop cataracts than men. Hispanic Americans and African Americans are also high risk for cataracts. Diabetes, smoking and over-exposure to sunlight have been linked to cataracts.

## Symptoms

During the early stages, cataracts may have little effect on vision and depending on the type and extent of the cataract, patients may experience the following symptoms:

- Cloudy vision
- Double or blurry vision
- Glare and sensitivity to bright lights
- Colors appear faded
- Difficulty reading due to reduced black-white contrast



A cataract is an opacity of the normally clear lens which may develop as a result of aging, metabolic disorders, trauma or heredity

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## Treatment

Cataracts never go away on their own, but some stop progressing after a certain point. Cataracts left untreated, to continue to grow, can reduce vision significantly. Fortunately, cataracts can **be successfully removed with surgery**. Millions of cataract surgeries are performed each year in the United States, and there is a very low risk for complications. However, before opting for surgery, patients need to consult with their eye doctor as to how severe a cataract interferes with their quality of life. Cataract surgery is rarely an emergency, so patients have time to consult with their doctors and carefully consider the risks and benefits of surgery.

## Cataract Removal Surgery

Surgery involves removing the cataract and replacing the abnormal lens with a permanent implant called an intraocular lens (IOL). The operation is less than 1 hour and performed on an outpatient basis. If you have cataracts in both eyes, your doctor will recommend waiting at least 1 month between surgeries.



This photograph shows a cloudy white lens (cataract) behind the pupil. Cataracts are a leading cause of decreased vision in older individuals. With new surgical techniques, the cataract can be removed, a new lens implanted, and the person can usually return home the same day.

Dr. Andy Baldus is an optometrist with HealthView Eye Care Center-Colby. 715.223.4003.