



FADED IMAGES

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How do you feel, when the images captured by your cameras turn faded, or they don't look that perfect as expected. It's upsetting and disturbing. In hope of keeping those snaps and shots perfect, you take great care of those expensive lenses. You buy filters and protectors just to keep those shiny lenses of your posh cameras safe and dust free.

Think of your eyes, those natural cameras popping out of your head are priceless compared to the most advanced cameras in the world. What on earth would be the feeling, if those eyes started delivering you, unclear images? Cataract is such a disease that could do so.

What is Cataract?

Have you noticed the transparent matter of eggs turn white when heated on a frying pan? This egg white is a protein that gets denaturalized on heating. Such is the case in eyes. Our natural lenses are made up of protein and are transparent. Cataract occurs when there is degradation of proteins in then lens, making it cloudy. This prevents light from passing clearly through the lens, causing some loss of vision. Though, new lens cells keep forming on the outside of the lens, the older cells get compacted into the centre of the lens resulting in the cataract.

Types of Cataract

- **Congenital cataracts**- Babies are sometimes born with cataracts due to infection, injury or poor development during pregnancy period. Some may develop cataract during their childhood.
- **Age-related cataract(senile)**- This type of cataracts develop with age, as we grow old, cells in our lens start wearing out leading to cataract.

- **Traumatic cataract**- Injuries to the eye sometimes, lead to formation of cataract, they are known as traumatic cataract.
- **Secondary cataract**- Medical conditions such as Diabetes, exposure to toxic substances, ultraviolet radiation, and use of certain drugs such as steroids, may sometimes lead to cataract formation.

Causes of cataract

Some people may develop cataract for no visible cause, but factors that may increase the chance of developing cataracts are-

- Having poor diet
- Diabetes
- Smoking
- Exposed to UV-radiation
- Long term use of steroids
- Having a family history.

Symptoms of Cataract

Depending on the severity of cataract, your sight may be affected ranging from slightly blurred vision to complete blindness of one or both eyes.

Usually the following symptoms are noticed-

- Gradual dimness of vision
- Vision that is cloudy, blurry or foggy.
- Loss of colored vision
- Unable to see in brightly lit rooms or in sunshine
- Having spots in your vision
- seeing halos around street lights
- Sudden changes in glasses prescription.

Treatment of Cataract

If any of the above symptoms are noticed, it's better to consult the doctor, as; getting early treatment may save you from undergoing surgery. The doctor would

run some tests, determining the state of your vision, and planning a treatment modality accordingly.

Usually vision can be corrected to an acceptable level with the help of new pair of glasses.

But if this loss of vision cannot be corrected with glasses and cataract is hampering your daily life, surgery may be the only option left.

There's nothing much to worry, as this surgery is usually conducted on an outpatient basis and has been found to be very successful with minimum complications. Surgery involves removing the clouded lens and replacing with a clear, artificial one. Cost of it depends on the quality of replacement lens. There are three types of cataract surgery-

1. **Phaco-emulsification** – This is the most common and the most modern method of cataract surgery; no stitches are required and takes only half an hour.

2. **Extracapsular cataract surgery** – This is a bit older method, and is done in facilities where *phaco* is unavailable. In some advanced cases of cataract the surgeon may opt for this option, as the old lens may be hard to dissolve

3. **Intracapsular cataract surgery** – This surgical technique is rarely used today, but may be an option in extreme traumatic cases, where the new lens is placed in front of the iris.

Types of Lenses

Your doctor may discuss with you, what sort of lens you prefer or is required in your case. There are different types of lenses available in the market, ranging from mono-focal to multi-focal, hard to soft, local to foreign. Depending on the type of lens, and method use, the cost of surgery differs, but the good news is, cost of cataract surgeries have decreased over time.

Prevention

- Though there are no proven preventive methods against cataract, some changes in lifestyle may prevent cataract to some extent-
- Diabetic patients, can keep their blood-sugar at controlled level to prevent development of cataracts
- Wearing sunglasses with UV protection while outdoors might slow the progression of cataract
- Leading healthy life, with balanced diet and regular exercise will prevent cataract and millions of other diseases
- Smoking must be ceased to continue seeing this beautiful world.

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