



**FLORIDA EYE**

*Microsurgical Institute, Inc.*

**TOTAL EYE CARE UNDER ONE ROOF**

## **Risk Factors for Developing Cataracts**



## Are You at Risk for Developing Cataracts?

**A cataract is a small cloud that develops in the lens of the eye.**

It's made up of natural proteins that normally are spread out across the lens but instead have become bunched together -- forming a hazy cloud. Eyeglasses or contact lenses can usually correct slight refractive errors caused by early cataracts, but they cannot sharpen vision if a severe cataract is present. Once a cataract has developed to the point that it makes everyday life difficult, surgery is the only option to restore vision.



"About 22 million Americans age 40 and older have cataracts, and the older a person gets the greater the risk for developing them. By age 80, more than half of all Americans either have a cataract or have had cataract surgery." — *Dr. Barry Schechter, M.D., F.A.A.O., Director of Cornea & Cataract Services, External Diseases & Comprehensive Ophthalmology*

## So Technically the Answer Is Yes, Everyone Is at Risk for Developing Cataracts

However, there are people who have a significantly higher risk of developing them than others. This is why it is so important to know your personal risk factors, as well as the symptoms for cataract development.

Some of these personal risk factors can be controlled, while others cannot be.



# How Many of the Following Risk Factors Can You Check Off?

## Fifteen Personal Risk Factors for Developing Cataracts

- 1** Women are more likely to develop cataracts than men; most likely due to the fact that women tend to live longer than men. **(Not controllable)**
- 2** People with diabetes type 1 or 2 are at very high risk for cataracts and are much more likely to develop them at a younger age. They also have a higher risk for nuclear cataracts than non- diabetics. Cataract development is significantly related to high levels of blood sugar (hyperglycemia). **(Yes – controllable. Have regular check-ups and lead a healthy lifestyle and have more control over this risk.)**
- 3** Smoking a pack a day of cigarettes may double the risk of developing cataracts. Smokers are at particular risk for cataracts located in the nuclear portion of the lens, which limit vision more severely than cataracts in other sites. **(Yes controllable – stop smoking or better yet, never start!)**
- 4** Chronic heavy drinkers are at high risk for a number of eye disorders, including cataracts. **(Yes control.)**
- 5** Glaucoma and its treatments, including certain drugs and filtering surgery, pose a high risk for cataracts. The glaucoma drugs that can increase risk for cataracts include demecarium (Humorsol), isofluorophate (Floropryl), and echothiophate (Phospholine). **(Not controllable unless other medications are created that can be absorbed differently by the body.)**
- 6** Other medical conditions requiring long-term use of oral corticosteroids (steroids) pose a particularly high risk. **(Not controllable unless other medications are created that can be absorbed differently by the body.)**

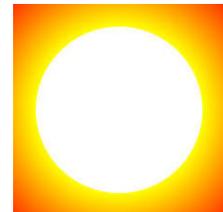


**7** African-Americans appear to have nearly twice the risk of developing cataracts as Caucasians. This difference may be due to other medical illnesses, particularly diabetes. African-Americans are much more likely to become blind from cataracts and glaucoma than Caucasians, mostly due to lack of treatment. (Not controllable.)

**8** Hispanic Americans are also at increased risk for cataracts. In fact, cataracts are the leading cause of visual impairment among Hispanics. (Not controllable.)

**9** Did your mother or father have cataracts? Another close relative? Cataracts tend to run in families. (Not controllable.)

**10** If you spend a lot of time in the sun for work or leisure, your risk increases. proper sunglasses, sunscreen and long sleeves and a hat are all steps to take to lower this risk. (Controllable.)



**11** Have you had any previous eye surgeries? (Not controllable.)

**12** Have you ever had an eye injury or inflammation of your eyes? (Protective eye gear makes injuries controllable, but eye inflammation may not be controllable, depending on the eye condition.)



**13** Do you have high blood pressure? (Controllable with exercise and medication.)

**14** Do you practice good eating habits? People who consistently follow a healthy diet that includes colorful fruits, vegetables and whole grains may show a decreased risk of cataracts. Antioxidant vitamins and phytochemicals found in fruits and vegetables that may reduce the risk of cataracts include vitamins A, C and E, lutein and zeaxanthin. Consumption of fish, which is high in omega-3 fatty acids, also has been linked to potentially reduced risk of cataracts or their progression. (Controllable.)

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Are you seriously overweight? Obese people generally do not consume healthy diets, and poor eating habits come into play again. Taking better care of your body means you are helping to take care of your eyesight as well. (Controllable.)



## So Now You Know Your Risks...

## But What Are the Symptoms You Should Watch for?

### Symptoms of Cataract Development

- Cloudy or blurry vision is a sign.
- Colors seem faded.
- Glare from headlights or lamps, or the sun may appear too bright. A halo may appear around lights.
- Poor night vision is another sign.
- Experiencing double vision or multiple images in one eye, which may clear as the cataract gets larger.
- Frequent prescription changes in your glasses or contact lenses is another sign of possible cataracts.

### See Your Doctor

"If you experience any of the above symptoms or are age 60 or older, you should have a comprehensive dilated eye exam at least once every two years. In addition to cataracts, your eye doctor can check for signs of age-related macular degeneration, glaucoma, and other vision disorders. Early treatment for many eye diseases may save your sight." — *Dr. Jason Gorscak, M.D., Refractive Cataract Surgery, Glaucoma & Comprehensive Ophthalmologic Care*





# **FLORIDA EYE** *Microsurgical Institute, Inc.*

Florida Eye Microsurgical Institute offers a full range of total eye care, including routine examinations, pediatric eye care, dry eye, advanced corneal, retinal and cataract procedures, laser treatments, glaucoma, diabetic procedures and various other sophisticated treatments. With its own pediatric wing and fully accredited outpatient surgical center in Boynton Beach, the Institute also has offices in Wellington, Boca Raton and Juno Beach.

Florida Eye enjoys a reputation as the premier center for clinical trials of breakthrough therapies nationwide. At any given time we are conducting studies in a variety of conditions such as Wet and Dry AMD and Diabetic Retinopathy. For information on current or future studies contact Margo Dague, our study coordinator, at (561) 736-5055 or via email at [margo@fleyedocs.com](mailto:margo@fleyedocs.com). You can also visit our site at [fleyedocs.com](http://fleyedocs.com).



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