



What is a cataract?

The human eye contains a natural lens that functions like the lens of a camera. It is about the size of a kernel of corn. The term "cataract" means clouding of the lens. Usually, cataracts occur, like the graying of the hair, as a natural part of the aging process.

Cataract surgery removes this natural lens from the eye. In earlier years, very thick glasses or contact lenses had to be worn. Cataract glasses were quite troublesome because they magnified images by 25% and seriously impaired peripheral vision. Contact lenses are superior to glasses because image size is increased less, but handling of a contact lens is difficult for some individuals, especially if hand tremor is present. Most contacts must be inserted and removed daily. Dusty conditions can be a severe problem.

Cataract removal

Cataracts are usually removed by phacoemulsification, also known as "phaco", using ultrasound to separate the cataract into small pieces, which are gently suctioned out. (laser is not suitable for human cataracts at present, although it is useful for other eye problems.)

Lens implants

Nearly always we place a tiny lens implant inside the eye at the time of the operation, making contact lenses and thick cataract glasses unnecessary. It is superior to spectacles or contact lenses because objects are normal size and it is permanently in place, not having to be removed or cleaned, as with contacts and glasses. Implants have been tolerated by the human eye for more than fifty years.