

EYE ON HEALTH

New Technology Treats Cataracts And Turns Back The Clock On Your Vision

(NAPSA)—More than 20 million Americans older than 40 have cataracts and nearly 3 million people have cataract surgery in the United States annually. August is Cataract Awareness Month, and the American Academy of Ophthalmology wants Americans to know that because of technological advances, cataract surgery solves more vision problems than ever.

The good news for cataract patients is the result of the advances in Intraocular Lenses (IOLs), which are artificial lenses that replace the eye's natural lens. Though IOLs have been approved by the FDA for more than 20 years, technological breakthroughs mean that IOLs now offer the possibility of seeing well at more than one distance without the need for glasses or bifocals. More than 95 percent of cataract surgeries are performed without complications.

"Advanced IOL technologies have made cataract surgery one of the most successful procedures available for restoring patients' quality of life," said Wayne Bizer, DO, an ophthalmologist in Florida and clinical correspondent for the Academy. "Not only is the cloudiness that comes from cataracts gone after surgery, but patients often have better visual acuity than they have had in years."

In the past, IOLs were monofocal, meaning that they offered vision at only a single distance. The new-technology lenses are multifocal, meaning that they can offer vision at multiple distances, or accommodating, meaning that they have the ability to move, thus focusing as the eye's natural lens did when you were younger.



More than 95 percent of cataract surgeries are performed without complications and result in significant improvement in vision.

What Is a Cataract?

A cataract is a gradual clouding of the clear lens in the eye, the part that focuses light and produces clear images. Cataracts form slowly and painlessly, but can eventually lead to blindness in the most acute cases. Symptoms include blurriness, sensitivity to light and the need to read with brighter light.

Nearly half of all people will have a cataract by the time they are 65 years old. In addition to aging, other causes of cataracts include a family history of cataracts, eye injuries, medications (such as steroids) and long-term, unprotected exposure to sunlight.

EyeCare America's Seniors EyeCare Program

In honor of Cataract Awareness Month, EyeCare America, a public service program of the Foundation of the American Academy of Ophthalmology, encourages people to call its Seniors EyeCare Program. This national, year-round program offers eye exams and up to one year of care at no out-of-pocket cost to qualified patients

who are without an ophthalmologist. People age 65 and older can call 1-800-222-EYES (3937) to determine if they are eligible to receive a referral for a free eye exam and up to one year of care. The EyeCare America help line operates 24 hours a day, every day, year-round.

To supplement its award-winning referral program, EyeCare America has recently created a new Web site specifically designed to assist online users in learning more about eye problems such as cataracts.

The site, eyecareamerica.org, contains up-to-date clinical information about cataracts reviewed by certified ophthalmologists, with links to current treatments and even an interactive tour of the eye's anatomy. Also included are easy-to-use functions such as a vision simulator, which allows users to see how vision would be affected from common eye diseases, and informative videos, created by the American Academy of Ophthalmology. For more information on cataracts, risk factors and treatment options, visit www.eyecareamerica.org.

About the American Academy of Ophthalmology

AAO is the world's largest association of eye physicians and surgeons—Eye M.D.s—with more than 27,000 members worldwide. Eye health care is provided by the three "O's"—opticians, optometrists and ophthalmologists. It is the ophthalmologist, or Eye M.D., who can treat it all—eye diseases and injuries—and perform eye surgery. To find an Eye M.D. in your area, visit the Academy's Web site at www.aao.org.