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News Column for Daily News  
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January 28, 2009

Gradually, over the past several months, you have begun to shy away from nighttime driving; headlights look like starbursts, street signs are hard to read, you have missed some turns, and you never saw that car coming from the right, narrowly avoiding an accident at the intersection. On top of that, you have 100 watt light bulbs in all the lamps and you still do not have enough light to read the paper...and the racing forms at the track have become a nightmare.

Finally you breakdown, pick up the phone, and get yourself an eye exam. After all the drops, the bad magazines, and the bright lights, you get the verdict: you have a cataract...in both eyes, no less. Great. Now what?

First of all, don't panic. Cataracts are a normal process in which the normally clear lens inside the eye starts to yellow. As light enters the eye, it must pass through the lens to be focused on the retina, the nerve layer in the back of the eye. Like our hair turning gray, our lens turns yellow. The darker yellow the lens becomes, the more blurred or dimmed our vision becomes.

Rest assured that having a cataract will not damage the eye; the only reason to remove it is to see better, to make the glare better, to make colors more vibrant, or to improve night vision, reading vision, or driving vision. No, we have no vitamins or drops to dissolve a cataract; better diet may help your heart but will not fix your cataract. Surgery really is the only way to remove a cataract.

Cataract surgery is now a quick, relatively safe, ten minute out patient procedure requiring only eye drops for anesthesia...and a little sedation to relax you. With an operating microscope to magnify everything, we make a small 3 mm incision into the eye, break the cataract into little pieces and remove it through a tiny handheld vacuum cleaner, then replace it with a clear plastic lens implant.

This implant, made of high quality plastic, is well-tolerated by the eye and will outlast both you and your surgeon. It is also the secret to rapid visual recovery that today's cataract patients enjoy. We can even build most of your glasses correction into the implant so that most patients can see well enough to drive without glasses after their surgery. As an added bonus, patients today may also choose to have a bifocal or astigmatism-correcting lens implant for more versatile vision (at a premium over and above what insurance will cover).

Although complications can occur with any surgery, 95-99% of cataract patients do very well and are back to normal activities the very next day with no restrictions on bending or lifting. The tiny incision heals quickly and most people have both eyes done within a couple of weeks to minimize the imbalance created by having only one eye fixed.

In summary, if your glasses always seem dirty, if the lights just are not bright enough, if you are missing the road signs, if blues and blacks look alike, or the newspaper seems to be making the print smaller, don't put it off any longer. Better vision may be just a phone call away.