

**“It’s a
different
world and a
brighter
world.”**

*Vicky and Doug Kingsmore,
Clemson Eye, Clemson Clinic patients*



Recognizing When You Have a Cataract

More than 24 million Americans have cataracts, and with the youngest of the Baby Boomers now in their 50s, that number is expected to increase to 30 million by 2020.

What is a Cataract?

Cataracts are a clouding of your eye’s natural lens. They slowly develop over time, when proteins in the lens start to clump together, blocking light and causing blurry, dull vision. Cataracts typically start to develop by age 60, and affect more than 70% of Americans over age 80. But they can start earlier, as one in six people age 40 and up have a cataract.

Left untreated, cataracts cause progressively impaired vision and eventual blindness.

What are the Signs of a Cataract?

Because cataracts generally do not cause pain, redness or tears, people often don’t even realize they are developing one. Here are the signs to be aware of:

- Blurred vision, double vision, ghost images, or you sense a “film” over your eyes.
- Lights seem too dim to see close-up, or night driving is difficult.
- New prescriptions for eyeglasses don’t improve your vision.

If you’re having difficulty going about daily activities, such as reading or driving your car, because of blurred vision, you may have a cataract and should book an eye exam with your eye doctor immediately.

If you do require cataract surgery, it is one of the most commonly performed and safest surgical procedures in the United States.

Inflammation is a possibility, but rare, and if it does occur it is treatable. The vast majority of cataract patients – 99.5% – report no complications from their surgery. It is an approximately 15-minute out-patient procedure with most patients returning to their normal activities the same day.

What are the Treatment Options?

If a cataract is impairing your vision, then surgery is really the only treatment. There are no proven medications to treat them or slow their progress. The surgery involves removing the cloudy lens of the eye, and replacing it with an artificial lens called an intraocular lens implant (IOL).

For basic cataract surgery, the procedure is done manually with a blade and the replacement lens is a “single focus” lens, so patients generally remain dependent on glasses post-surgery. Basic cataract surgery is covered by most insurance plans, Medicare and Medicaid.

“Until a few short years ago, eye surgeons used a blade to manually open the eye and capsule supporting the lens. This increased the chance of variable outcomes,” says Dr. Joe Parisi, chief ophthalmologist and medical director at Clemson Eye. “Today, the procedure can be done with much more precision and result in more predictable outcomes when a laser is used.”

If there are no other problems with the eye, cataract surgery almost always successfully restores good vision. With recent advances in laser cataract surgery, more patients – regardless of their age – are achieving 20/20 or close to 20/20 vision.

Doctors at Clemson Eye were among the first to perform laser cataract surgery in the Upstate. Introducing a laser to the procedure is a major innovation. The advantages are many, according to the doctors at Clemson Eye.

“Laser cataract surgery benefits patients because it results in much more precise incisions, less stress on the eye and less damage to the eye’s delicate tissues,” says Dr. Don Glaser, also of Clemson Eye.



Image I: Bladed incision.

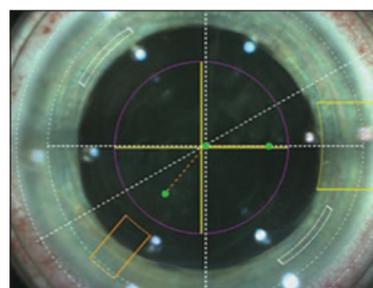


Image II: Laser incision.

Modern laser cataract surgery involves a tiny 2.2 mm stitch-less laser incision and the replacement of the diseased, cloudy lens with a clear lens implant. “With the FDA’s recent approval of the LenSX® laser for use in cataract surgery, we can create incisions that are up to 10 times more precise than manual incisions,” says Dr. Glaser. See Images I and II.

The Kingsmores
Clemson residents, Vicky

and Doug Kingsmore, who’ve been married for more than 57 years, both opted for laser cataract surgery.

“For 35 years, I wore big horn-rimmed glasses and had problems seeing things in the distance,” says Mr. Kingsmore, an alumnus of the Baltimore Orioles and member of Clemson University’s Board of Trustees since 1990.

“It hampered all my sports activities.” Mr. Kingsmore had an advanced multi-focus lens called the ReSTOR® lens implanted during his laser cataract surgery. “After my surgery, I could read the telephone book and newspaper. It helped me tremendously – but more than anything else it improved my golf game! I can see to hit the ball. I know where it lands. I can find it. It has been the most wonderful thing to happen to me in my adult life,” he says.

Mrs. Kingsmore had her laser cataract surgery a couple years after Doug’s surgery, and she too opted for a ReSTOR® lens implant. “It’s a different world,” she says. “It’s a much brighter world. I don’t need to look for my glasses anymore, because I can read just about anything without them.”

Astigmatism Correction During Same Procedure

“Astigmatism is a defect in the cornea or lens that leads to blurry vision, trouble reading, squinting, eye strain, headaches and tired eyes. It is common and often present from birth,” explains Dr. Brian Johnson of Clemson Eye. “With the introduction of laser technology to cataract surgery, we can also correct a patient’s astigmatism during the same cataract procedure. It is quite revolutionary.”



Left to right: Dr. Glaser, Dr. Parisi and Dr. Johnson.

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