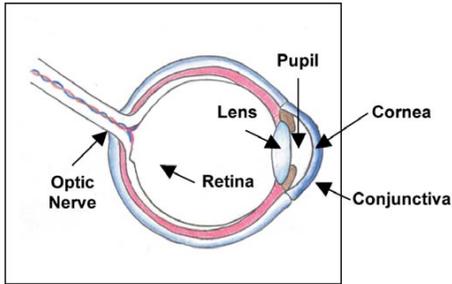


CATARACTS

Cancer treatment sometimes requires the use of medications or radiation that can increase the risk of developing cataracts. Because vision can have a significant impact on daily living, it is important for survivors who received these treatments to have their eyes checked regularly.



WHAT IS A CATARACT?

A cataract is clouding of the normally clear lens of the eye. Cataracts often develop slowly, but as the clouding increases, vision can be affected.

COMMON SYMPTOMS OF CATARACTS INCLUDE:

- Painless blurring of vision
- Sensitivity to light and glare
- Double vision in one eye
- Poor night vision
- Fading or yellowing of colors
- The need for frequent changes in prescriptions for glasses or contact lenses

WHAT CANCER THERAPIES INCREASE THE RISK OF DEVELOPING CATARACTS?

Certain medications, including:

- Busulfan
- Corticosteroids, such as prednisone and dexamethasone

Radiation therapy to the following areas:

- Eye and surrounding tissue (orbits)
- Head or brain (cranial)
- Total body irradiation (TBI)

The risk for cataracts increases with:

- Higher radiation doses
- Frequent exposure to sunlight
- The passage of time (the longer off therapy the survivor is)

WHAT MONITORING IS RECOMMENDED?

- Have an eye examination every year during your regular check-up
- See an eye specialist (ophthalmologist or optometrist) for a full eye

evaluation **every year** if you had:

- TBI
- High doses of radiation to the head, brain or eyes
- A tumor involving the eye **every 3 years** if you had lower doses of radiation

HOW ARE CATARACTS TREATED?

Not all cataracts need treatment. In many cases, an ophthalmologist may monitor the vision closely over many years, and will recommend treatment if and when it becomes necessary. The only treatment for cataracts is surgical removal of the lens and replacement with an artificial lens. Today, cataract surgery is a low-risk procedure that is performed on an outpatient basis and usually is successful in restoring vision.

WORKS CITED

Adapted from Children's Oncology Group Long-Term Follow-Up Guidelines for Survivors of Childhood, Adolescent, and Young Adult Cancers

<http://www.survivorshipguidelines.org/>