

## Cataracts: Common Condition, Quick Correction

40 may be the new 30, but your eyes may not have received the memo yet. Fact is, we might feel younger than our years, but some body parts still wear out right on schedule.

The lens of the eye is one of those parts. We're living longer, but our eyes aren't keeping up. Surgery to remove cataracts, which routinely form in older eyes, is the most common surgery in the United States.

And, according to VSP doctor and cataract-specialist Alice Sterling, O.D., it's the safest and most effective surgery too. She gives the low-down on the condition:

"The lens works like a magnifying glass inside your eye," says the Winter Springs, Fla. doctor. "As the magnifier ages and changes, you can start to develop yellowish or opaque spots on it that will cause your eyesight to deteriorate significantly, with cloudiness and blurring the most common result."

Cataracts are pretty much unavoidable. About half of adults between 65 and 75 develop them, and after 75, that number goes way up.

But don't let your eyes make you feel old. Cataracts can grow for several years without any signs, and glasses can often postpone surgery. Once surgery is needed, no need to worry. The procedure is outpatient, painless and comes with a quick recovery – with normal activities resuming in just a few days. The surgeon just replaces the clouded lens with a fresh, clear implant – it typically takes less than half an hour.

It's a cliché to say "sight is precious" – but that's exactly how we feel. Sight can also be the sense on which your very livelihood hinges. That was case for one of Dr. Sterling's patients, a woman who draws for a living.

### **From Clouded Colors to Clarity**

Imagine drawing for living and, after years of clear vision and a successful career, suddenly the world looks different. It would be devastating. That's what happened to 72-year old Dell Healy. The freelance illustrator began noticing she was unable to see the nuances of different shades of color. A trip to her optometrist, Dr. Sterling, confirmed her cataracts had gotten bad enough to warrant surgery.

Her doctor reassured her about the relative simplicity and safety of the procedure.

A few days later, surgeon Dr. Harry Pappas gave Dell her colors back.

"I was wide awake the whole time and felt no pain," Dell remembers. "After a few minutes, I asked Dr. Pappas, 'When are you going to start the operation?' He laughed and then he told me, 'You're all done — it's over.' I was back home in less than two hours."

Within a few more hours, Dell's vision was already improving dramatically.

"I'm reading books and newspapers again, and I can watch television without wearing my glasses," she says. "But the best part of all is that I can see colors again."