KELLOGG EYE CENTER
UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN HEALTH SYSTEM

Posterior Capsular Opacification

This material will help you understand posterior capsular opacification and how it is treated.

What is posterior capsular opacification?

Posterior capsular opacification occurs when a little bit of scar tissue forms behind your artificial lens implant from cataract surgery. Posterior capsular opacification can only develop after you have had cataract surgery. It is sometimes called a "secondary cataract," though it is not a real cataract, it is just a little bit of scar tissue.

What causes posterior capsular opacification?

During cataract surgery, the doctor removes the cataract from the eye. The cataract is the eye's natural lens that has become cloudy. The natural lens is held in place inside the eye in a little bag called the capsule. During cataract surgery, the lens is removed and the implant is placed inside this capsule. The capsule can form a thin layer of scar tissue and begin to make the vision blurry again after the cataract has already been removed.

Some people with posterior capsular opacification also experience worsening glares from sunlight or bright lights along with blurred vision.

How is posterior capsular opacification treated?

Treatment is simple and fast. A procedure called YAG laser capsulotomy is used to remove the scar tissue from the back of the lens implant to restore vision. The procedure usually takes less than 15 minutes. The eye is numbed with drops and a contact lens is placed on the eye. During the procedure, you will sit at the laser, which feels just like sitting at the slit lamp. After the contact lens is placed on the eye, the doctor is able to aim the laser energy at the scar tissue and clean it up.

After the procedure, your doctor will have you use anti-inflammatory drops for a few days. You may notice some floaters just after the procedure from the scar tissue that has been broken up. This is normal. These floaters will settle to the bottom of the eye in about 24 hours. If you have flashes of light that look like lightening when the eye is closed along with floaters, this is not normal and you should call your doctor right away.

You will see your doctor in one week to evaluate the effects of the laser and make sure that you have healed well.

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