



YOUR EYES AND CATARACT

**Regular eye checks
keep our eyes healthy**

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

The Indigenous Eye Health Unit (IEHU) at The University of Melbourne acknowledges the Traditional Owners of Country throughout Australia and recognises their continuing connection to waters, communities, and lands.

IEHU is grateful to the Traditional Owners, Elders and Knowledge Holders of all Indigenous Nations and Clans who have been instrumental in our journey to Close the Gap for Vision. We extend our respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, cultures and Elders; past, present and emerging.



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- An Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Reference Group (workshop participants) made up of the target audience including those with lived experience
- Gilimbaa – Indigenous-led creative agency

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ARTWORK STORY

'TRAVERSING COUNTRY' by Gilimbaa artist David Williams (Wakka Wakka).

These elements represent the strength and vibrancy of First Nations people all over Australia. We are diverse and culturally strong peoples with humour to share and stories to tell. We are forever connected to Country, our families, and our communities.

Continuity of culture is one of the most important things for First Nations peoples. Our health and wellbeing is strengthened by these connections. The connections here are represented as a continual line from left to right; the line has no end.

As we walk on, feel, and see our Country, we are connected.



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3. What are the symptoms of cataract?
4. What causes cataract?
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7. Reducing your risk of developing cataract



THE EYE

CATARACT

SYMPTOMS

CAUSES

**REGULAR
EYE CHECKS**

TREATMENT

**REDUCE
YOUR RISK**

INTRODUCTION

Cataract is the leading cause of blindness for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and is a major cause of vision loss; however, it can easily be treated.

USING THE FLIPCHART

This flipchart has been developed by IEHU, as part of a broader range of activities within *The Roadmap to Close the Gap for Vision* which aims to improve eye health outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

This flipchart aims to provide information and raise awareness about cataract, including cataract surgery. It is picture-based, with wording on one side, to allow health workers and other primary care providers to help explain and educate people about cataract and their eyes. The flipchart can be used one-on-one or with small groups.

This flipchart is part of the 'Eyecare Now, Eyecare Always' health promotion resources.

For more information on other eye health promotion resources, please visit Indigenous Eye Health Unit www.iehu.unimelb.edu.au



THE EYE

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SUPPORTING ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER PEOPLES WITH CATARACT



1. EARLY DETECTION AND REGULAR EYE CHECKS

In primary care (for example your Aboriginal Medical Service or local health clinic), an eye check can detect the early signs or symptoms of eye conditions such as cataract. An eye check should be part of an annual 715 health check.

2. EDUCATION AND SUPPORT

Educating and supporting people on the risk factors for developing cataract (including sun protection, stopping smoking, controlling diabetes) is important for preventing vision loss and blindness.

3. REFERRAL PATHWAYS

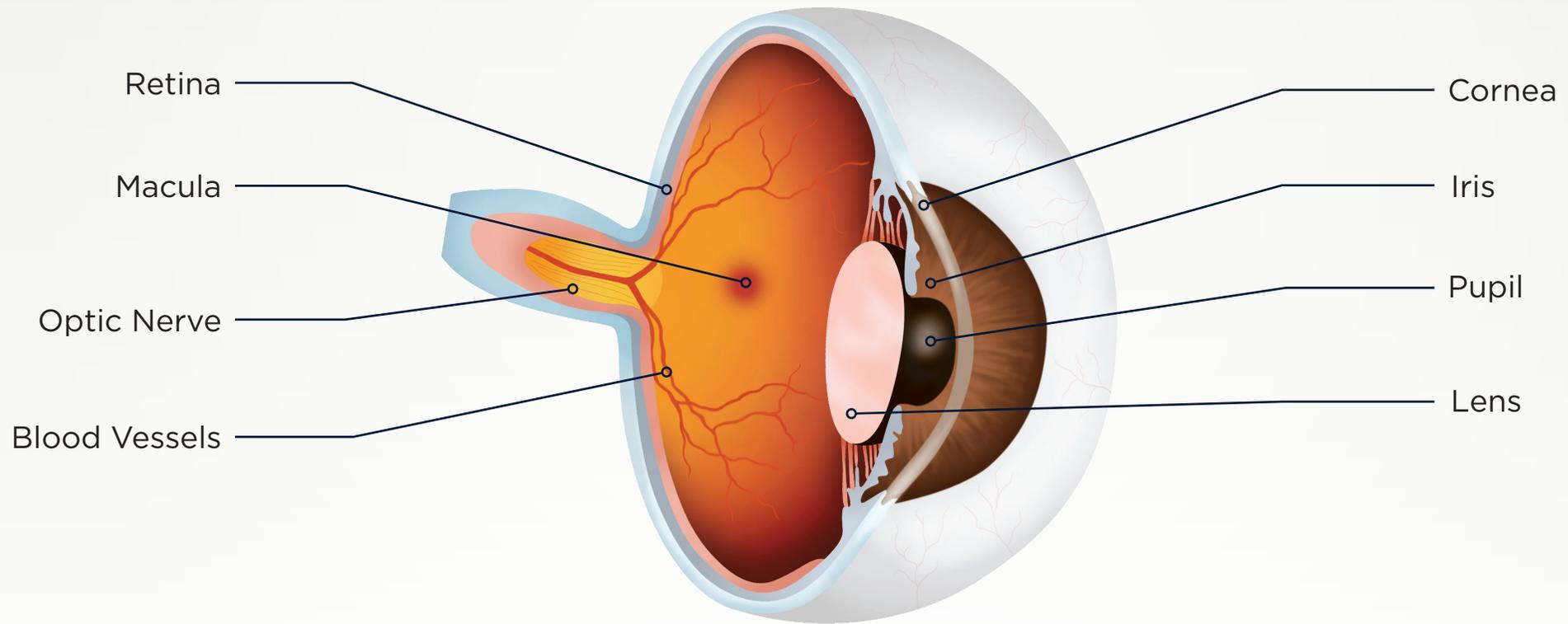
Providing information about eye care pathways will help Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples get to the next step – for further assessment with an eye specialist (optometrist and/or ophthalmologist). Most optometry and ophthalmology services are covered by a Medicare rebate.

4. TIMELY TREATMENT

Once cataract is detected, supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people on treatment options as directed by an eye specialist can prevent further vision loss from cataract.

THE EYE

MAIN COMPONENTS OF THE EYE



THE EYE

MAIN COMPONENTS OF THE EYE

CORNEA

The clear outer part at the front of the eye. It helps to focus light through the pupil to the retina.

IRIS

The coloured part of the eye. It regulates the amount of light entering the eye.

PUPIL

The opening at the centre of the iris. The iris adjusts the size of the pupil and controls the amount of light that can enter the eye.

LENS

A clear part of the eye behind the iris that helps to focus light, or an image, on the retina. **Cataract affects the lens.**

VITREOUS

A transparent, colourless gel that fills the eyeball between the lens and the retina.

RETINA

Appears as a red/orange layer of tissue at the back of the eye. It is the light-sensitive tissue at the back of the eye that sends vision signals to the brain.

MACULA

The central area of the retina. This part of the retina is responsible for fine, detailed vision.

BLOOD VESSELS

Are made up of arteries and veins visible on the retina. They allow blood to maintain the function of the retina.

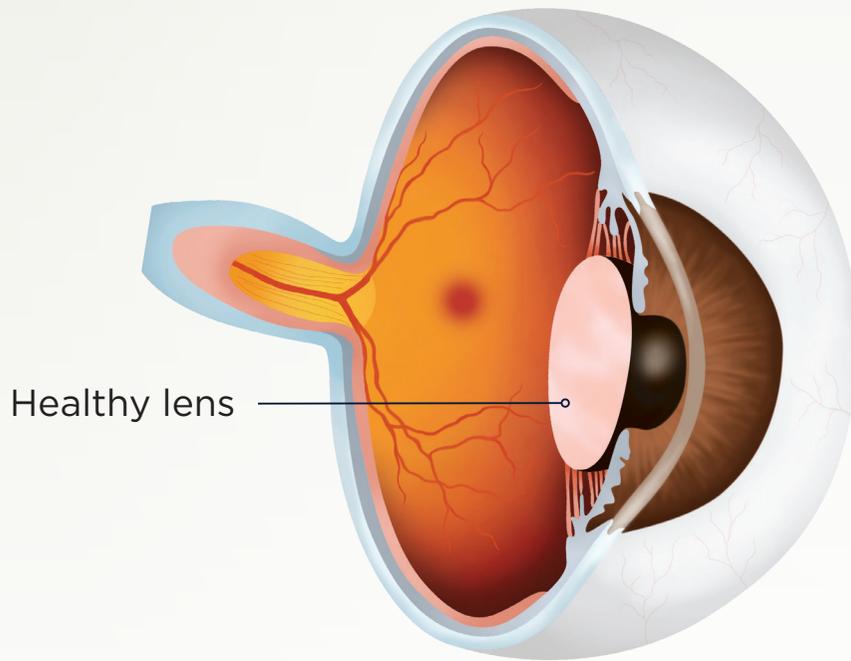
OPTIC NERVE

Appears as a round nerve in the retina. It carries messages from the retina to the brain and is responsible for the blind spot.

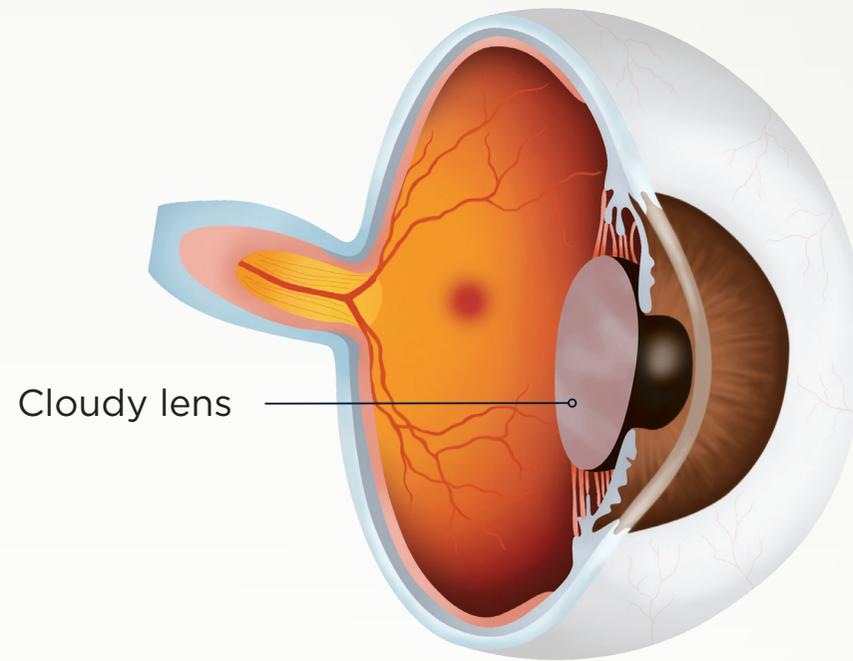
WHAT IS CATARACT?

Cataract is a clouding of the lens inside the eye.

Cataract can affect one or both eyes and can lead to blindness.



Healthy eye

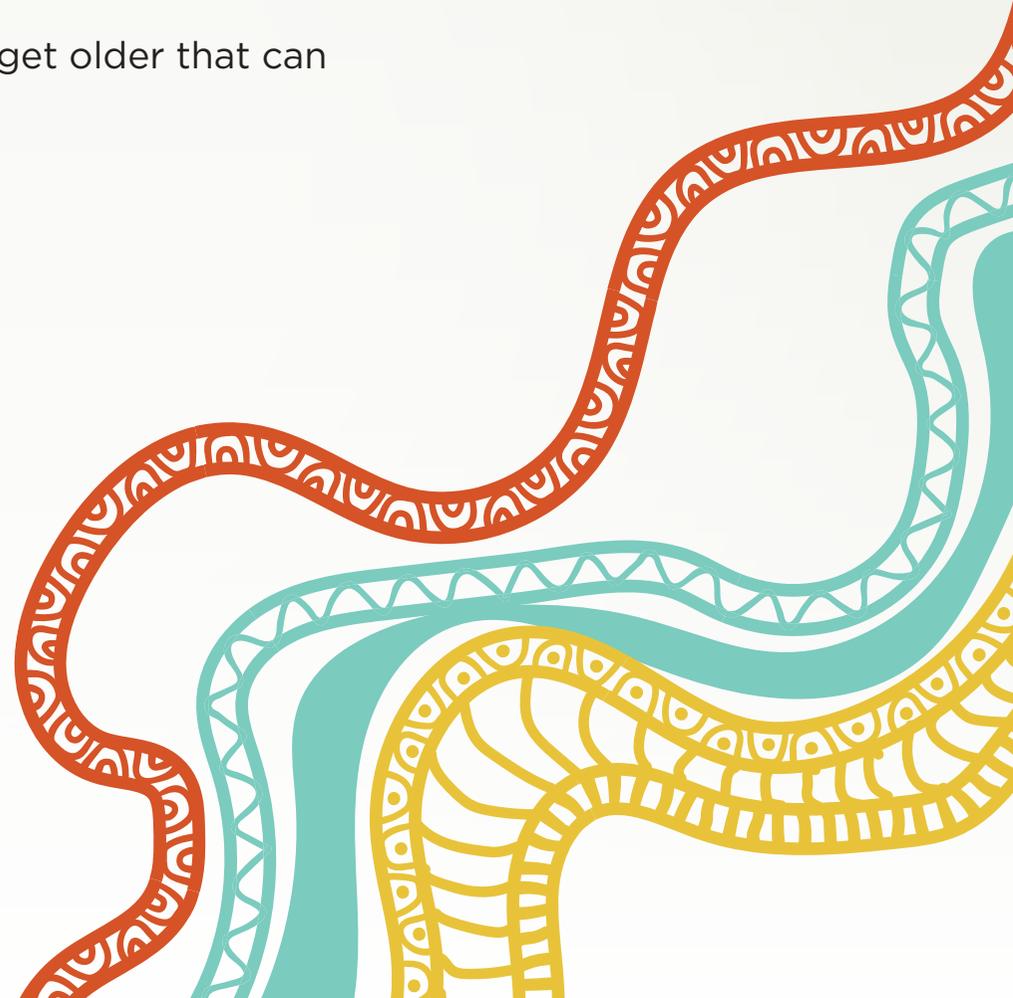


Eye with cataract

WHAT IS CATARACT?

- Inside your eyes we have a lens, a healthy lens is clear
- If you have cataract, this lens becomes cloudy. It is like looking through a foggy or dusty car windscreen. Things look blurry and may also be less colourful
- Cataract can develop in one or both eyes and can lead to blindness
- Cataract does not spread from one eye to the other eye
- Cataract is a very common cause of vision loss as people get older that can easily be fixed

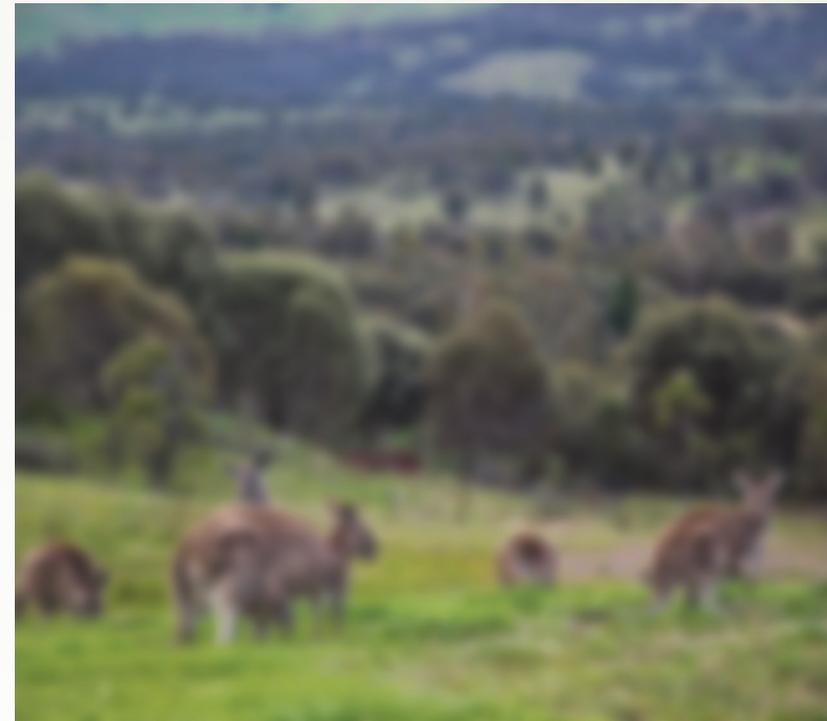
CATARACT



WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS OF CATARACT?



Healthy vision



Blurry or cloudy vision from cataract



SYMPTOMS

WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS OF CATARACT?

Cataract usually appears slowly over time. As the cloudy lens develops, so do the symptoms which can include:

- having blurry or cloudy vision
- being more sensitive to light (lights may seem glary and uncomfortable)
- having difficulty seeing well at night
- seeing colours as faded or yellow

SYMPTOMS



WHAT CAUSES CATARACT?

The most common cause of cataract is ageing. The older you are the more likely you are to develop cataract.



Ageing



Diabetes



Sun Exposure



Medication



Smoking



Eye Injury

CAUSES

WHAT CAUSES CATARACT?

The most common cause of cataract is ageing. The older you are the more likely you are to develop cataract.

Other reasons you may develop cataract include:

- some health conditions like diabetes
- having spent a lot of time in the sun, outside or out on Country (especially without sunglasses or a hat)
- the use of some types of medication for long periods of time
- having an eye injury
- smoking or excessive alcohol consumption

If your parents, brothers, sisters or other family members have cataract, you are more likely to also develop cataract.

CAUSES



HOW IS CATARACT DETECTED?

Cataract is detected through a full eye examination by an eye specialist.



**REGULAR
EYE CHECKS**

HOW IS CATARACT DETECTED?

CATARACT IS DETECTED THROUGH A FULL EYE EXAMINATION BY AN EYE SPECIALIST

- In primary care (for example your Aboriginal Health Service or local health clinic), an eye check can detect the early signs or symptoms of eye conditions, such as cataract
- An eye check should be part of your annual 715 health check
- An eye check can be carried out at your local health clinic by your health worker, nurse, doctor or someone that has been appropriately trained
- Your health worker, doctor or local health clinic can support you with appropriate referral to an eye specialist (optometrist and/or ophthalmologist) for your full eye examination, and then treatment and management

EYE SPECIALIST

Optometrist: Health professional who assesses eye health and vision problems including the prescription and provision of eye glasses.

Ophthalmologist: Specialist eye doctor who manages and treats eye conditions including eye surgery.

**REGULAR
EYE CHECKS**

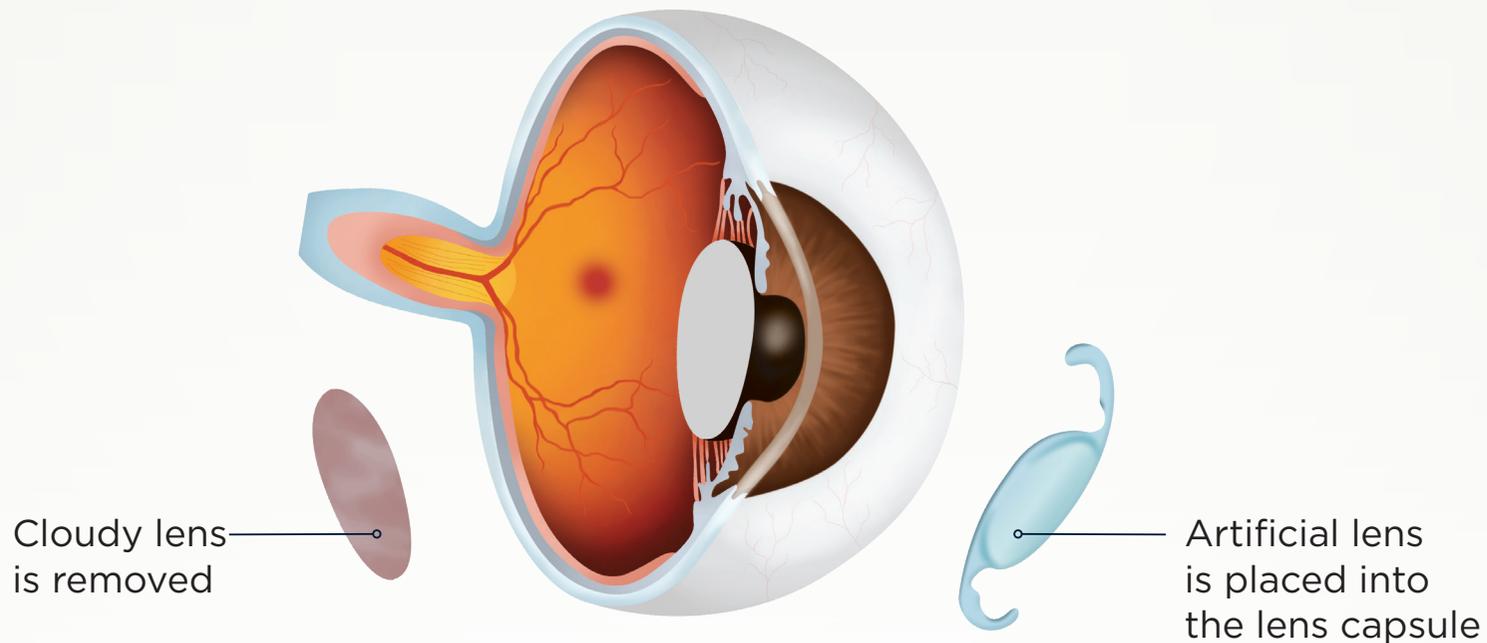


HOW IS CATARACT TREATED?

Cataract surgery should be considered if your cataract starts affecting your daily activities and quality of life, for example if driving and reading is more difficult.

During cataract surgery your ophthalmologist will remove the cloudy lens and replace it with an artificial lens.

Cataract surgery is a simple and quick operation to improve your vision.



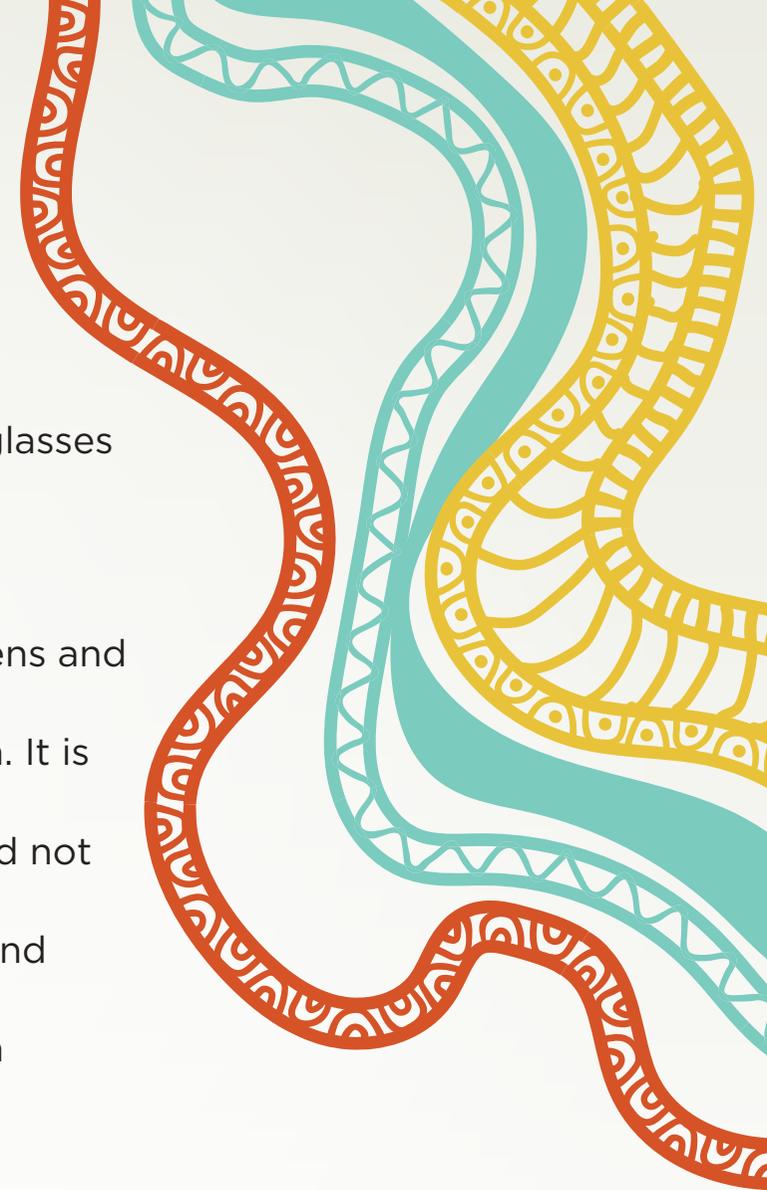
Cloudy lens is removed and replaced with an artificial lens

TREATMENT

HOW IS CATARACT TREATED?

During the early stages of cataract, an updated glasses prescription may improve your vision, although as the cataract develops further changing glasses may not help.

- Cataract surgery should be considered if your cataract symptoms start affecting your daily activities and quality of life
- During cataract surgery your ophthalmologist will remove the cloudy lens and replace it with an artificial lens
- Cataract surgery is a simple and quick operation to improve your vision. It is usually done under local anaesthetic in a hospital
- Following cataract surgery, an eye patch might be worn, and you should not rub your eye
- Antibiotic and steroid drops might be prescribed to prevent infection and inflammation
- Cataract surgery is a simple and quick operation to improve your vision



REDUCING YOUR RISK OF DEVELOPING CATARACT

There are steps you can take to help reduce your risk of developing cataract. You can:



Get a regular eye check



Manage your diabetes



Eat a healthy diet



Wear sunglasses and a hat



Stop smoking



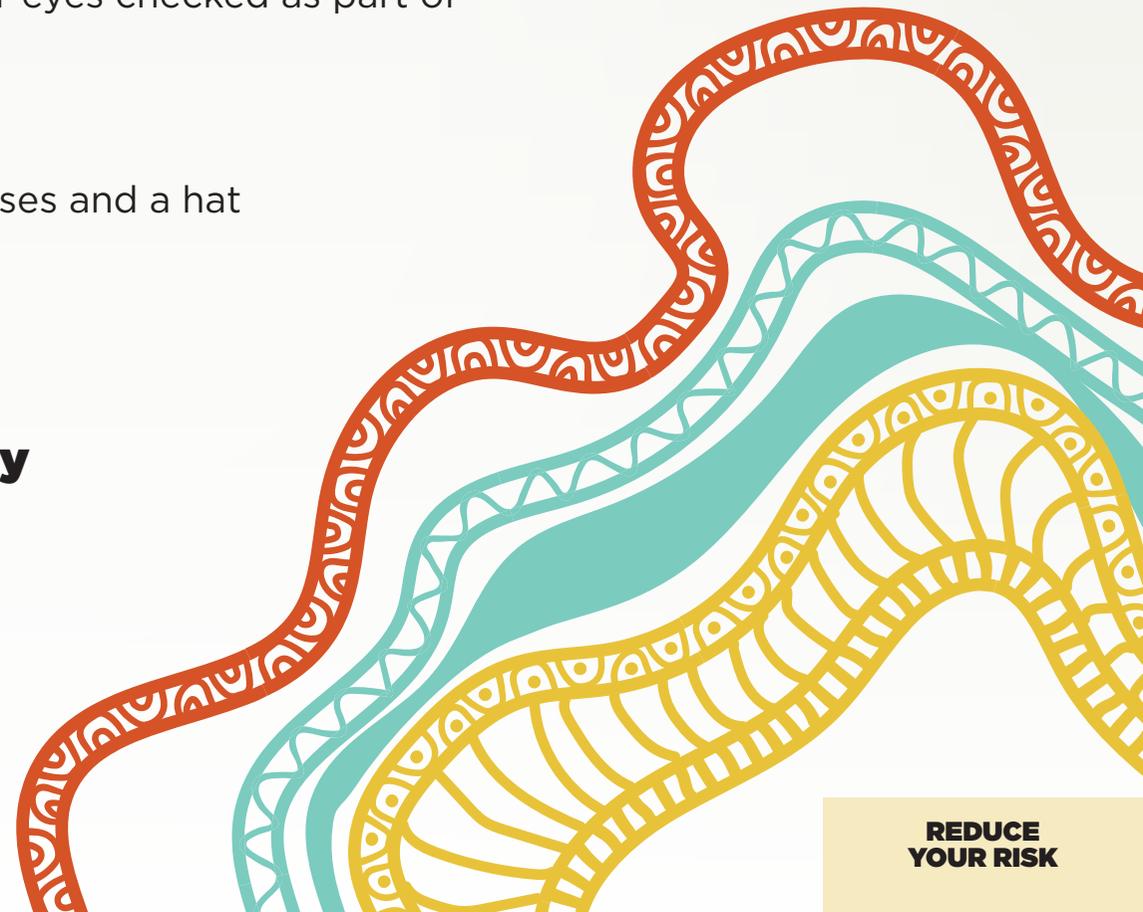
Reduce your alcohol consumption

REDUCING YOUR RISK OF DEVELOPING CATARACT

There are steps you can take to help reduce your risk for developing cataract. You can:

- take care of your overall health by getting a regular eye check for early detection of eye conditions like cataract. Have your eyes checked as part of your annual 715 health check
- have good diabetes management
- eat a healthy diet
- protect your eyes from the sun by wearing sunglasses and a hat
- if you are a smoker stop smoking
- reduce alcohol consumption

Regular eye checks keep our eyes healthy



**REDUCE
YOUR RISK**



MORE INFORMATION

For more information about '*Eyecare Now, Eyecare Always*' health promotion resources or additional eye health promotion resources please visit www.iehu.unimelb.edu.au or contact:

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Australian Government
Department of Health

