Cataracts, What You Need to Know

Were you aware cataracts are the leading cause of vision loss in the United States, and the leading cause of blindness in the world? June is Cataract Awareness Month, so we thought it only appropriate to share some cataract facts, symptoms, treatments, and best practices to prevent cataracts.

Cataracts are a very common eye disease affecting millions of people, but it is easily treatable, and in most cases can be corrected with a fast, minor and virtually pain-free surgical procedure. In fact, cataract surgery is the most commonly performed surgery in the U.S. each year.

Cataracts are a clouding of the lens of the eye, which prevents passage of light into the eye. Symptoms may include blurred or distorted vision, sensitivity to light, the need to get closer to see distant objects, loss of depth perception, or a change in the color of the pupil to a milky white or yellow. In cataract surgery, the natural lens of the eye is removed and replaced with an artificial intraocular lens (IOL). This new lens allows the patient to see clearly again.

Unfortunately, if left untreated, cataracts can lead to partial or total blindness. Most cataract cases in the United States are in older adults, but children may also develop pediatric cataracts. Here are a few factors that can increase your chance of developing a cataract:

- Family history of cataracts
- Excessive exposure to sunlight
- Smoking
- High blood pressure
- Diabetes
- Obesity

Even though there is no proven way to prevent age-related cataracts, choosing a healthy lifestyle can slow the progression. Some ways to delay the progression of cataracts include avoiding smoking, reducing exposure to UV rays, eating healthy foods, and wearing proper eye protection to avoid eye injury.

Although cataracts are the world’s leading cause of vision loss, it is an eye disease that can be treated easily and successfully. A couple of decades ago, cataract surgery was still considered high risk and associated with long recovery times. Today, cataract surgery is an outpatient procedure, which can even allow a patient to operate a vehicle one day after surgery. Your vision is precious, so keep your eyes healthy and have a comprehensive eye exam once a year.
Elena Gonzalez, President of the Board of Directors starting July 1, is retired from the Senior Executive Service, U.S. Department of the Interior, Washington DC and received her Juris Doctor degree from George Washington University. Elena shares with us some of her insights...

Q *What is the most important thing you hope to accomplish as a FLEC Board Member?*  
Help establish a long term vision for the Clinic that anticipates future needs and opportunities.

Q *What do you think is your best attribute you bring to FLEC?*  
A commitment to continuous learning.

Q *What do you see in the future for FLEC?*  
I see expansion and increased reach so we can help more people.

Q *What is the best piece of advice you’ve ever given?*  
Be curious and open to possibilities.

Q *If you were a superhero, what would your superpower be?*  
Perseverance

Q *Do you have any skills or talents that most people don’t know about?*  
I enjoy teaching. Two of my favorite teaching experiences have been showing kids how to play tennis and educating adults on conflict management and collaborative problem-solving.

Q *How do you think your friends would describe you?*  
Laughs easily  
Ethical  
Kind  
Open-minded  
Persistent (nice word for stubborn)  
No sense of direction when driving

Q *What’s your favorite hobby?*  

Q *What’s on your bucket list?*  
To temporarily reside in a Spanish speaking country and become fluent in Spanish.

Q *If you could meet one person (dead or alive) who would it be?*  
My maternal grandfather.

Q *If you were stuck on an island what three things would you bring?*  
Water, Books, Almonds

Q *What is the one thing you can’t live without?*  
Kindness

Q *Where is the best place you’ve traveled to and why?*  
I traveled for three weeks in South Africa, Botswana and Zimbabwe and loved the natural beauty and the extraordinary safari experiences as well as the people, food, history and culture.

Q *Do you have a favorite quote?*
New Drug Program to Benefit Patients

The price of medicated eyedrops has been an issue for our patients needing drops to treat infections, glaucoma, and healing after surgery. The current prices can reach $100- $200+ for a small 5cc (ml) bottle, and the number of drops in a bottle are only for a one month supply. Generic drops are cheaper but may not be as effective as the newer medications.

The patients at the Florida Lions Eye Clinic cannot afford these expensive drops and have no insurance coverage. In the past, some drug companies would donate samples intermittently for us to give patients. Unfortunately, the bottles were only partially filled with no guaranteed refills. This was a problem especially with glaucoma patients who needed drops daily.

As of June 1, the Florida Lions Eye Clinic entered into an agreement with the Novartis Patient Assistance Foundation (NPAF), part of the world-wide pharmaceutical company, called the Institutional Patient Assistance Program (IPAP). The program provides replacement of Novartis products to approved charitable pharmacies for further distribution by the clinic to qualified patients of the clinic.

NPAF is committed to providing access to Novartis medications for those most in need. This program is critical for helping our patients access to medications when it is unaffordable. The FLEC doctors are confident this new drug program is helping our patients gain access to these vital medications.

Check Out This Inspiring Article from The Banner

'We have a vision here': Robin Goldstone Garcia new ED for Florida Lions Eye Clinic

For the area’s poorest and uninsured people getting eye care can be daunting and difficult. But about 2,000 people a year have found a way to get the help they need.

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Digital Eye Strain

Viewing a computer or digital screen often makes the eyes work harder and can cause a condition known as digital eye strain. This condition can cause dry eyes, eye strain, blurred vision, and headaches. Here are a few simple eye exercises that may help you improve digital eye strain symptoms.

**Blinking**
Blinking helps to keep the eyes refreshed and maintain focus for longer, but we often forget to blink when we are staring at a computer or phone screen. For this exercise, face forward, blink every 5 seconds for two minutes.

**Focusing Near and Far**
Put your thumb in front of your face, about 10 inches away, and focus on it. Now focus on something else that is approximately 20 feet away. Switch between near and far focusing repeatedly over a period of 2-3 minutes.

**Zooming**
Stretch your arm out in front of you and raise your thumb in the hitchhikers position. Focus on the thumb and draw it in until it's three inches away from the face. Keep your focus on the thumb. Then slowly move the thumb back to the starting position. Repeat several times over 2 minutes.

**Rest**
Last but not least always remember to give your eyes adequate rest by ensuring you get eight hours sleep. If you are using computers, try to rest your eyes for 10 minutes away from the screen every 50 minutes.

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The "Eyes" Have It

It is said the eyes are the window to the soul, and are the most expressive part of the face, but is it possible to recognize a person only by his/her eyes?

Below are four iconic Americans, all legends in their own way.

- Do you know who they are?
- (Plus we’ve included a little known fact about each one.)

Not sure? You can discover their identities on our Facebook page - click here: [https://www.facebook.com/fillec.org](https://www.facebook.com/fillec.org)
She married her first husband when she was only sixteen years old. The marriage lasted only four years.

He had a twin. He was born about 35 minutes after his identical twin brother, Jesse Garon, who was stillborn.

She landed her first Life Magazine cover at the age of 15 and was on the cover 14 times throughout her life, a record-number.

He was a James Bond fanatic.

We're participating in the myWalgreens donation program!

At Walgreens, you’ll earn unlimited 1% Walgreens Cash rewards when you shop with your myWalgreens membership and you can contribute $1, $5, or more of your Walgreens Cash rewards to local and national charities making a difference in your community. It’s that easy and the amount you donate is up to you!

Donate your myWalgreens cash rewards to Florida Lions Eye Clinic thru August 31, 2021. Learn more at www.mywalgreens.com