

you

**HEALTH TIP**

It is a misconception that women who lift weights will get bulky muscles. Head to the gym now!

COUNTER CATARACT



Cataract has been the most widespread eye ailment and the myths surrounding it are equally so. **Dr Cyres Mehta** helps you see through them

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Most senior citizens after they reach the age of 50 are likely to undergo a cataract surgery. Even though the number of patients is on the rise, the myths and fallacies surrounding this eye ailment is on the rise too. **Dr Cyres Mehta, ophthalmic surgeon, Saifee Hospital and Dr Keiki Mehta's Eye Hospital** dispels the myths and provides the facts.

MYTH - Cataract occurs only to old people

FACT - Cataract can occur at any age! Cataract can occur in newborn babies through infections like rubella which the mother can contract while the baby is in the womb and in infancy due to metabolic disorders like Galactosemia. Taking medicines like steroids for other diseases, undergoing radiation for cancer and

working in a steel mill where the eye is exposed to infrared rays can all cause cataract. Any blow to the eye usually results in cataract.

MYTH - Cataract is called Motia because it has to do with formation of pearls in the eyes

FACT - Cataract is nothing but clouding of the lens in the eye. The protein in the human lens (like a camera lens) coagulates and denatures. Looking at the white pearly appearance of the lens, ancient doctors named this Motia or pearl.

MYTH - Cataract can be cured with the use of eyedrops

FACT - Many times non-medical practitioners float the idea of miracle eyedrops which will dissolve the cataract. They put dilating drops in the eye which al-

lows more light to enter the eye. The person sees marginally better but this lasts only for a few hours. But cataract is an irreversible chemical reaction that can only be treated by surgery.

MYTH - Cataract operations should not be done in summer

FACT - In the olden days after a cataract operation the patients head was immobilised between sandbags and he was not allowed to turn or move for a month, even to go to the toilet! Naturally, summer was a bad idea as the patient could not take a bath for a month. Today, the cataract can be removed through an incision as small as 0.7 mm. The person is mobile instantly and can go home in two hours wearing spectacles. No more is the summer ban valid.

MYTH - A big painful injection before surgery is a norm

FACT - Today, modern centers no longer deaden the eye with local anaesthesia. Eye drops are put on the eye and the patient is conscious during surgery. He/she feels no pain but only a little pressure at times. In selected cases, injection is given to deaden the area around the eye. The needle is very fine and the patient usually feels only a small prick in the skin.

MYTH - Surgery can be done without a lens implant in the eye

FACT - Performing a cataract surgery today without a lens means that we have converted a cataract blind person into a spectacle blind person. Doing the sur-

gery without the appropriate lens implant is like doing a knee replacement without the prosthesis. Today lens implant is performed in 100 per cent cataract surgeries even in small towns.

MYTH - The lens placed in the eye will have to be removed. It will break and get bad over a period of time.

FACT - The lenses today are injected into the eye through a one to two mm tunnel which seals instantly and needs no stitches. The lenses are made of acrylic plastic and they do not cause a reaction. Lens implanted even 40 years ago show no sign of aging.

MYTH - You have to wear spectacles for reading after surgery.

FACT - Modern lenses can be of multifocal design. These allow the patient to be spectacle independent. They do not have to wear spectacles for reading.

MYTH - I will have to be housebound for a month. I will not be able to cook for a month

FACT - As the small opening seals instantly the person can go back to normal life, drive the next day and can even go for a run on the fourth day. This varies from case to case and is best decided by the treating surgeon.

— AS TOLD TO PRIYANKA PEREIRA



Cataract causes symptoms including blurry vision near and/or far, sensitivity to glare, and an imperceptible but progressive loss of colour vision as the lens turns yellow. The image on the right is how a cataract patient will perceive a normal image(L)