

Miller Eye Center

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Fact Sheet: “Secondary Cataract” and YAG Laser Capsulotomy

Approximately 50% of patients will develop significant clouding of the lens capsule behind the intraocular lens (IOL) implant following cataract surgery. More common in younger patients, this cloudiness may develop quickly or gradually anytime after surgery and can lead to a decrease in vision often described as blurring, hazing, glare and reducing or loss of visual acuity. This condition, known as posterior capsule opacity, is also referred to as a “secondary cataract”. Cataracts themselves, however, never recur following cataract surgery.

A secondary cataract is not dangerous. Fortunately, it is easily treatable and nearly always restores or improves vision. It is rare for a secondary cataract to reoccur. Treatment for a secondary cataract is a YAG Laser Capsulotomy. In this Medicare approved procedure, a cold cutting laser, termed a YAG laser, is used to cut a small hole in the clouded back lining of the lens capsule. This painless, outpatient procedure is performed at Rockford Ambulatory Surgery Center. Similar to an office visit, one’s eye is dilated for 30-60 minutes and then the laser procedure only takes a few minutes. Typically one’s vision is substantially blurred for an hour or two, so you may wish to bring a driver. There are no preoperative preparations, nor postoperative activity restrictions.

The decision to have this procedure is based on the same criteria as the decision to have the original cataract surgery:

- Vision problems that are interfering with your work or lifestyle.
- Many of the symptoms are similar to problems caused by a cataract:
 - Glare at night or reduced night vision
 - Difficulty reading small print like newspaper or the telephone book
 - Difficulty seeing distance objects such as street signs or television print

Ask your doctor if you are a candidate for Nd:YAG Laser Capsulotomy!