

# **Can cataracts come back?**

By Samir I. Sayegh, MD, PhD  
Medical Director, The EYE Center

## **Saxophone: My future career**

In one of my early columns I discussed cataracts and their treatment. I explained how the procedure has evolved and how, in the vast majority of cases, people get an excellent outcome. I also talked about how I started learning the saxophone, getting ready for my new career that will start the day a cure to cataracts is found, that does not require surgery. That is my after-cataract career. But let us talk about another after-cataract issue.

## **The little cells that wouldn't stop growing**

One of the questions I get quite often is whether cataracts can come back. In the same eye, that is. The short answer to this question is that cataracts do not usually come back. The biology of the human lens however gives rise to an interesting phenomenon. There are cells that keep growing and contributing to the size of the human lens. At the time of cataract removal and sometimes despite a meticulous "clean-up" operation, some of these cells stay behind, hiding microscopically so to speak. Nobody told these cells that the cataract is gone and that their job is done. Over a period of time, ignoring the patients' wishes and the surgeon's best intentions, these cells continue growing and multiplying. Sometimes this can result in an increasing opacity at the back of the new implanted lens and that can affect the vision, giving the impression of a return of the cataract. Some may argue that this is indeed the case. The film that is formed however is very thin. It can be easily broken with a laser operation that is done in the office and takes less than one minute.

## **Ask your surgeon**

With a proper choice of the lens that is implanted and a good surgical technique, the after-cataract phenomenon is very unlikely to occur. As an example, lenses that are more likely to be associated with after-cataracts are silicone lenses. Make sure you ask your surgeon about the kind of lens implant they use and whether they are comfortable with the probability of an after-cataract associated with their lens and technique.

In conclusion there are steps that can be taken to avoid or minimize the chance of an after-cataract. The good news is that generally, even if an after-cataract develops, it can be eliminated by an office procedure.

Dr. Sayegh can be reached at The EYE Center. 352-2020