

Cataract



Description

A cataract is clouding or opacity of the crystalline lens (transparent flexible tissue that refracts light) which may prevent a clear image from forming on the retina (back of the eye). In cataracts, the crystalline lens may appear quite cloudy and obscure vision.

Cataracts can occur in one or both eyes and may develop throughout the life span. They range in size and density and may be insignificant or cause the entire lens to become opaque.

Congenital cataracts are present from birth, while infantile cataracts occur during the first two years of life. Other forms of cataract are caused by eye trauma or aging.

Implications

Cataracts cause a reduction of visual acuity, low contrast-sensitivity, issues with glare and photophobia (sensitivity to light), and loss of accommodation (difficulty achieving and maintaining focus).

As cataracts develop, the denser clouding decreases visual acuity (the clarity and sharpness of vision), causes viewed images to blur, increases depth perception difficulties, and causes peripheral visual field issues. Colour may be perceived as faded, washed out, and images tinged brown or yellow.

Prompt treatment of childhood cataracts is important. Lenses may require surgical removal if vision loss becomes significant. Treatment may also involve intraocular lenses, contact lenses or aphakic spectacles.

With early diagnosis, ophthalmology monitoring and treatment, and refractive correction, most children with cataracts have good outcomes.

Accessing the curriculum

Reduce classroom environmental glare. Avoid whiteboards, reflective white paper (buff may provide better access), and instruction next to windows.

Consider enlarging print and provision of dark lined paper.

Reduce visual clutter by ensuring learning materials are well spaced and well organised on a page.

Remove unnecessary visual information. Ensure strong contrast.

Use bullet points rather than long narrative text when presenting information.

Use additional verbal descriptions to support instruction and understanding.

Consider the impact of visual fatigue and offer eye rest time after prolonged reading and writing activities.

Encourage the student to wear sunglasses to reduce glare when outdoors.

Modify physical activities and provide detailed verbal instructions of all actions, skills and game rules (where necessary). Provision of verbal cues in throwing and catching activities may assist.

Click to see an [Interactive Eye Diagram](#) (web link)

As this document contains generic information, please consult with the Vision Education Program in regard to individual educational needs.

References

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