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I Can See Clearly Now, The Pain Is Gone

No-needle cataract surgery revolutionizing a common procedure.

Cataract surgery used to be a major operation, requiring lengthy recovery and a lifelong dependence on special glasses. Today, though, cataracts - a clouding in the lens of the eye caused by aging, sun and super-radicals in the environment, and particularly prevalent in adults with diabetes - can be removed in about ten minutes, with no injections and so sutures. Most patients can see just fine without glasses the next day.

"In the old days," explains **MARK FROMER, M.D.** a board-certified ophthalmologist who performs the latest cataract-removal surgery at Saint Vincent's, "anesthetic was injected into the eye with a needle. In fact, 95% of surgeons still use injected anesthetic, but here at Saint Vincent's, I use drops to numb the eye. That's a real boon to older patients who are on blood thinning medications like Coumadin, for whom injections can be risky; with the drops, there is no risk to patients on anticoagulants."

In the past, once the patient was anesthetized, cataracts were removed with a scalpel through an eight millimeter incision, and then the eye was stitched up. With the latest procedures, though, an ultrasound vibrates the eye, fragmenting the cataract into microscopic pieces. The shattered cataract is then aspirated (vacuumed up through a tiny tube). Then, a tiny replacement lens is folded and inserted through a three millimeter incision in the eye. Inside the eye, it opens like an umbrella, spreading to its proper size and position and enabling the patient to see without special glasses. The wound heals without stitches, and the patient goes home the same day.

How long does the surgery take? Less time than it would take you to pick frames at your optician: a neat ten minutes, with just a little bit of rest after the procedure.

For more information on needle-free cataract surgery, please call 212-832-9228.