The natural lens has a cellophane-like outer lining called the capsule. During cataract surgery, the back membrane of the natural lens (posterior capsule) is left in place to support the artificial lens implant. The posterior capsule is normally clear; however, three out of four people who have cataract surgery will eventually develop a wrinkling or cloudiness of this membrane, which is often referred to as a secondary cataract (see Figure 1).

**What causes secondary cataracts?**

This wrinkling or cloudiness, which can develop months or years later, is a result of scarring (a normal healing response) and can interfere with vision in ways similar to the original cataract. If the clouding of the posterior capsule interferes with your vision, Dr. Anderson may suggest opening the capsule to restore normal sight.

**What is a YAG laser capsulotomy?**

This is done with a procedure called YAG laser capsulotomy, whereby your doctor uses a laser beam to make a tiny hole in the posterior membrane to let light pass through and restore clear vision (see Figures 2 & 3). People often incorrectly believe that cataract surgery is completed using a laser. This misconception likely stems from the fact that nearly 75% of patients who have cataract surgery eventually need a YAG laser capsulotomy at a later date.

**What does the procedure involve?**

Although the laser procedure requires close and precise focusing by the ophthalmologist, for the patient the technique is a painless, outpatient procedure, and is never part of the original cataract operation.

**What are the risks associated with a YAG laser capsulotomy?**

A YAG laser capsulotomy is a surgical procedure; however, the risks of a serious complication resulting from this procedure are about 1/100th of the risks associated with a regular cataract operation. The most serious risk is retinal detachment which, at its onset, displays itself as a black curtain coming over the eye, affecting the side vision from any direction. The occurrence of retinal detachment may also be associated with the appearance of flashing lights. If you experience either of these symptoms, you should contact Dr. Anderson immediately.