

Table 5-1.

Advantages of Small-Incision Cataract Surgery

- Surgery can be performed more quickly
- Topical anesthesia (using eye drops) can be used instead of local-injection anesthesia
- It is safer if a patient accidentally moves or coughs during surgery
- No routine need for sutures
- Faster healing of the incision
- Generally no need to restrict exercise or physical activity
- Quicker recovery of sight
- New eyeglasses can be prescribed much sooner
- Less risk of the procedure creating or worsening astigmatism
- Permits the use of the newer, foldable intraocular lenses
- Less frequent need to change eyeglasses in the future

was originally designed in the 1970s but has since undergone continuous improvement, especially with modern computer technology. Once inserted, the microscopic phacoemulsifier probe uses ultrasound waves vibrating at 40,000 times per second to break up the cloudy lens gently (Figure CA-5). This process is called *phacoemulsification*, or *phaco* for short. The pieces of lens are carefully vacuumed out, and the new, foldable intraocular lens is inserted into the empty capsular bag, where it opens to its full size (Figures 5-2 through 5-4, Figure CA-6). Over a period of several weeks, the capsular bag contracts, essentially shrinkwrapping the lens implant and holding it firmly in place (Figure CA-7).