
Eyes – long-sightedness

Summary

- Long-sightedness is a common focusing problem.
 - The average person is a little long-sighted.
 - Slight long-sightedness may cause no problems.
 - More significant long-sightedness can cause blurred vision, headaches and tired eyes.
 - Glasses, contact lenses and laser surgery offer forms of correcting long-sightedness. Your optometrist can advise on the best option for you.
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Long-sightedness or hyperopia is a common condition that affects the ability to focus. In a long-sighted eye, the light focuses behind the retina, blurring the image. If it is significant long-sightedness can cause vision problems, headaches and tiredness. Glasses, contact lenses and laser techniques are used to correct long-sightedness.

Long-sightedness is common

The ability to focus light exactly onto the retina is unusual. In fact, the average person is a little long-sighted, which is not a problem as the eye compensates by changing the shape of the lens to refocus. However, a significant amount of long-sightedness can lead to blurred vision, particularly for close objects.

A long-sighted person may have clear vision, but may suffer from tired eyes and headaches after a lot of visual work. Reading may be more difficult and schoolwork can be affected.

Causes of long-sightedness are unknown

The exact causes of long-sightedness are not well understood. It is known that the eyeballs of long-sighted people tend to be smaller than average, with less curved corneas – the main optical component of the eye. There may also be a hereditary component, as the children of long-sighted parents can be long-sighted.

Correcting long-sightedness

Glasses and contact lenses are the most common method used to correct most refractive errors, including long-sightedness. The lenses in glasses converge the light rays, moving the focus back onto the retina.

Young people who are slightly long-sighted generally do not have problems. If they do, they may need glasses for close work such as reading and using computers.

Older people, or young people with significant long-sightedness, often have problems because focusing requires a lot of effort. Their vision is more likely to be blurred, especially for close objects, and they usually need glasses for reading and sometimes for distance vision.

For people with significant long-sightedness, contact lenses can be the best form of correction as they provide better vision and may be preferable to wearing thick glasses. Contact lenses can be made from different materials and can be disposable or non-disposable.

Correcting long-sightedness - laser treatments

In Australia, some surgeons use excimer lasers to correct long-sightedness. This treatment aims to steepen the central area of the cornea by removing tissue from the edge of the cornea in a doughnut shape. As excimer laser surgery does not alter the natural shape or elasticity of the lens inside the eye, people who have laser surgery may eventually need glasses for reading.

There has been much less clinical experience with laser treatments for long-sightedness than short-sightedness, and the results tend to be less predictable and accurate. Anyone contemplating such surgery should obtain as

much information as possible, including:

- Results for other patients taken over at least an 18-month period
- The risks of surgery, including potential effects on quality of vision
- The likelihood of regression back into long-sightedness.

Where to get help

- Your doctor
- Your local optometrist
- Optometrists Association Victoria Tel. (03) 9652 9100

Things to remember

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