

Astigmatism and Soft Contact Lenses

Astigmatism is an eye condition that causes blurred vision

There are two different types of astigmatism – regular and irregular.

Regular astigmatism is characterised by an irregular curvature of the cornea or lens of the eye. Rather than being round (like a football), the cornea or lens has different curvatures in different planes (like a rugby ball).

Irregular astigmatism is usually caused by damage to the eye, such as corneal scarring.

In either case light entering the eye is not focussed sharply on the retina. This results in a distorted image. Regular astigmatism is very common. Roughly 90% of people have some form of astigmatism, varying from very mild to severe. Most people with mild astigmatism are asymptomatic but in around 30% of cases the distortion is enough to cause problems. Astigmatism occurs with myopia (short sightedness) and hyperopia (long sightedness).

What are the symptoms of uncorrected astigmatism?

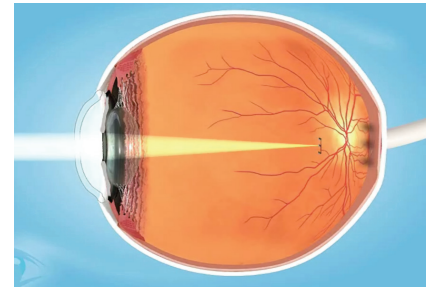
The main symptoms are blurred vision, light sensitivity (photophobia), headaches, eye strain and fatigue, especially after long periods of concentration, such as when using the computer. You may have difficulty seeing one colour against another or you may experience distorted images, such as lines that lean to one side. Severe astigmatism can cause double vision.

How to correct astigmatism.

Astigmatism can be corrected with spectacles, contact lenses and by laser surgery. Many people think they can not wear soft contact lenses if they have astigmatism but advances in technology means that most astigmatisms can be corrected with a soft lens.

Soft Toric(astigmatism) contact lenses.

A soft contact lens has two different power curves worked on it to correct the refractive error of the astigmatism. To maintain clear sharp vision throughout the day the soft contact lens has to stay in place. This is difficult as the lens can easily be rotated or shifted out of position by gravity and by the movement of the lids against the surface of the lens, particularly blinking. Manufacturers have overcome these problems with unique designs to give maximum stabilisation of the lens. On insertion the lens quickly centres to the correct position on the eye to give best vision. Soft lenses are very comfortable to wear. Lenses



can have a unique moisturising agent embedded in the lens to provide all day comfort. Toric lenses are now available as a daily disposable lens.

Your optometrist can advise which type of contact lens is most suitable for your eyes and your astigmatism prescription.

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