

Sight Matters

FAQ Sheets

Astigmatism

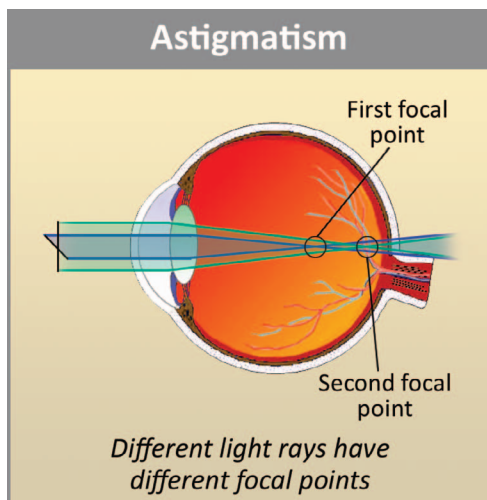
Astigmatism is the most common vision problem and it can accompany either long or short-sightedness (hyperopia and myopia).

Cause

The condition is a distortion in the shape of the eye. Instead of being round and spherical like a marble, the affected eye is somewhat distorted, like the shape of a grape.

This distortion is most commonly on the cornea (the window at the front of the eye), but it can also be within the eye affecting the lens or the retina.

The “out-of-round” shape causes different light rays to have different focal points, rather than just one when astigmatism is not present.



Astigmatism is usually inherited and the resulting vision problem does tend to get worse as people get older. It can also be the result of an eye injury where the resultant scarring of the cornea creates a distortion, or pterygium where the growth on the surface the eye pulls and distorts the cornea.

Correction

Astigmatism is usually corrected with spectacles or contact lenses where the principle is for the prescription to include an equal but opposite distortion, thus neutralising the astigmatism.

Astigmatism is also corrected with refractive surgery,



A blurred & distorted view corrected by a lens for astigmatism

but this will depend upon the type and severity of the condition.

Symptoms

Small amounts of astigmatism may cause headaches, eyestrain, fatigue and discomfort. Higher degrees result in distorted or blurred vision.

Tests

A common test that optometrists use for astigmatism is called the “Astigmatism Fan”. This consists of radial lines and is viewed with one eye at a time. If some lines look black while others are grey it is an indication that the person has astigmatism.



The “Astigmatism Fan” as seen without and with astigmatism

Another popular test is the “Astigmatism Block Chart”. The patient closes one eye and then the other; if they do not see all of the lined squares in the same black colour they are likely to have astigmatism.



Of course the best test for astigmatism is a complete eye examination with your optometrist.

Astigmatism Fan:



Astigmatism Blocks:

