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Hyperopia

Q What is hyperopia?

A The eye's lens and cornea focus light into an image on the retina, just as a camera lens focuses light on to a film. In a resting hyperopic (longsighted) eye, the light is focused behind the retina and so the image is blurred. The perfect state of focusing exactly on the retina is unusual; the average person is a little hyperopic.

Q How does hyperopia affect vision?

A A little hyperopia is not a problem because the lens compensates easily but if there is a significant amount of hyperopia, the effort of focusing (called accommodation) can lead to symptoms. A hyperopic person can have normal vision but the greater the hyperopia, the harder it is to focus. Vision may become blurry, especially for close objects, because the closer the object the more focusing is required. Hyperopic people may get tired eyes or headaches after a lot of visual work, even if their vision is clear. Reading is more difficult and school work can be affected.

Q What causes hyperopia?

A Hyperopia is often thought to be hereditary, but no-one is certain. The eyeball may be a little smaller than average.

Q Does hyperopia change with age?

A It tends to increase, but not always. We all find it harder to focus on close objects as we get older (see the brochure on Presbyopia). Hyperopes have trouble sooner and may need reading spectacles earlier because they have to focus more to start with.

Q How is hyperopia diagnosed?

A Because a hyperopic person often can see well in the distance, a letter chart test alone may miss hyperopia. Special tests have to be used, including retinoscopy and refraction.

Q What do we do about hyperopia?

A The optometrist has many things to consider when making a decision and symptoms are very important. In general, young people who are slightly hyperopic do not have problems. If they do, they may benefit from eye exercises or need spectacles, mainly for close work such as reading and using computers. 0 Ider people, or young people with significant hyperopia, often have problems because focusing requires much effort. Their vision is more likely to be blurred, especially for close objects. They usually need spectacles for reading and sometimes for distance vision as well.

Q What is shortsightedness?

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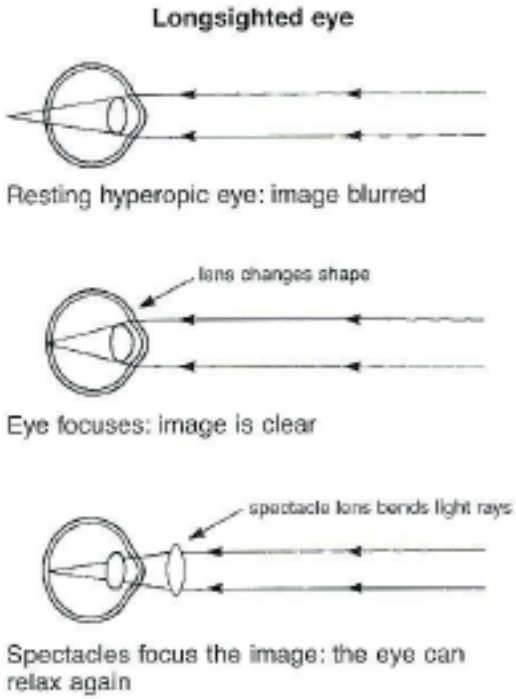
A People who are shortsighted, or myopes as they are called, cannot compensate for their defect by focusing. They need spectacles or contact lenses, especially for long distances. The brochure on Myopia will tell you more.

Q Why is hyperopia called longsightedness?

A Hyperopic people generally can see better in the distance than close, but they cannot see better at any distance than someone who is not hyperopic.



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