

Astigmatism

Astigmatism involves the cornea of the eye. The cornea is the transparent, dome-shaped window covering the front of the eye. In a normal eye, the cornea is round, shaped like a baseball or basketball. When you have astigmatism, the cornea is more oval shaped, like a football. The result is that light focuses on more than one point in the eye, which results in blurred vision.

While the usual cause of astigmatism is an irregularly shaped cornea (corneal astigmatism), it may also be caused by an irregularly shaped lens (lenticular astigmatism).

Symptoms

Blurred or distorted vision is the main symptom of astigmatism. If your astigmatism is only slight, it's possible you may not notice it. Children, especially, may be unaware that their vision is not as clear and crisp as it should be.

In addition to affecting vision, uncorrected astigmatism may cause headaches or eyestrain and further distort or blur your vision at all distances. For this reason, it's important that you and your child's vision checked regularly.

Causes

Astigmatism frequently occurs in those who also are nearsighted or farsighted.

Astigmatism can be caused by scarring of the cornea or swelling of the eyelid from an eye injury, from some types of eye surgery or from keratoconus, a disease that causes a gradual thinning of the cornea. Most often, though, the condition is hereditary and is present at birth.

Treatment

Unless it is extreme, astigmatism can be corrected with eyeglasses or contact lenses. Depending on the type and severity, astigmatism may also be corrected with refractive surgery.