

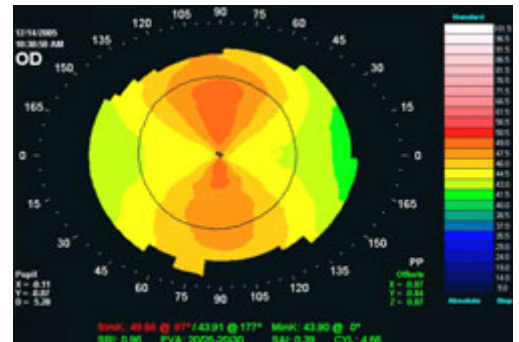
# ASTIGMATISM

This is a very common problem with the eyes which is easily corrected with glasses or contact lenses. This is where the vision may appear blurred for both near and for reading.

## **What is the cause?**

This is where the cornea or surface of the eye is not completely spherical but has what is more of a cylindrical shape causing the image to be distorted when focused on the letters. It is very usually a small degree of astigmatism which is thought to be due to the fact that the lids rest on the top part of the eye, slightly indenting the top part of the eye over the years. However, in some people this can become more exaggerated and cause the vision to be blurred. It is also usually combined with either being short or long-sighted.

This illustration here shows a bow-tie appearance of the surface of the cornea which is what commonly gives the astigmatism.



## **At what age?**

This can develop at any age. In those that are older the development of a cataract can cause a significant amount of astigmatism.

## **What can be done?**

It is not possible to alter the shape of the cornea and thus correction is undertaken with glasses or contact lenses.

**Contact Lenses.** Normal soft contact lenses do not correct any significant amounts of astigmatism and for those with more than 1 dioptre of astigmatism, it will be usual to correct this with gas permeable contact lenses which are rigid and form a spherical surface to the eye. The irregular gaps are filled with the tears to form a perfect spherical surface. However, for those that are unable to wear gas permeable contact lenses there are newer soft lenses and esoteric lenses which correct moderate amounts of astigmatism.

**Refractive Surgery.** Radial keratotomy is a technique which can be used to correct astigmatism and this is where small incisions are made into the eye to change the shape of the cornea. Laser surgery is another way to correct astigmatism.

## **How often should I have an eye test?**

Generally, once a year should be sufficient. In addition to checking that the glasses are correct, an eye test gives a thorough examination of the eye including, for those above the age of 40, a test for glaucoma.

Should you have any further queries, please do not hesitate to contact your Optometrist, Ophthalmic Practitioner or Doctor.

*Mr. Lee*

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