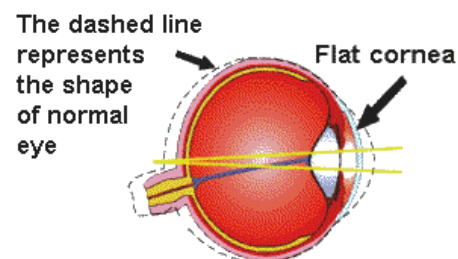


HYPERMETROPIA - LONG-SIGHTEDNESS

Hypermetropia is a medical term which colloquially is termed long-sightedness. This is a very common problem in which the eyes see better for distance than they do for near vision.

What is the cause?

This is usually due to the eye being too small as seen here in the diagram, and the focused image being placed behind the eye. However, the eye has the ability to use the lens to focus the image onto the retina by increasing the power of the natural lens as one does when reading. So for many, low degrees of hypermetropia are simply corrected by using one's focusing ability. However, this can lead to eye strain and in the young to squints as the brain thinks that you are reading a newspaper and moves the eyes inwards to focus on the paper. When hypermetropia exceeds 2 dioptres it is not usually possible to correct this and glasses or contact lenses will be needed.



At what age does this develop?

Infants are usually hypermetropic and as they grow and the eyeball enlarges they lose their long-sightedness which does not need to be corrected. While many people have small degrees of hypermetropia, it is often not until the age of 46 and above where the natural lens has aged and is losing its ability to be able to compensate and focus. At this stage it is common to identify and require glasses for distance as well for reading. In addition, someone who is hypermetropic often needs reading glasses at an earlier age than normal, perhaps at the age of 40 as opposed to 46 because the reserve used for reading is being used to see in the distance.

What can be done?

It is not possible to alter the size or shape of the eye and the wearing of glasses or contact lenses will correct the problem. In this case, positive lenses will be required. For those over the age of 40 it may well be necessary also to use a bifocal, multifocal or separate pair of glasses for reading. This is because the eye has lost its ability to be able to focus to close work which is a normal phenomenon.

Refractive and Laser Surgery. This is less successful than with short-sightedness and is generally speaking not recommended though work is being undertaken with the laser for hypermetropia and the results will be released in the future.

How often should the eyes be tested?

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.