

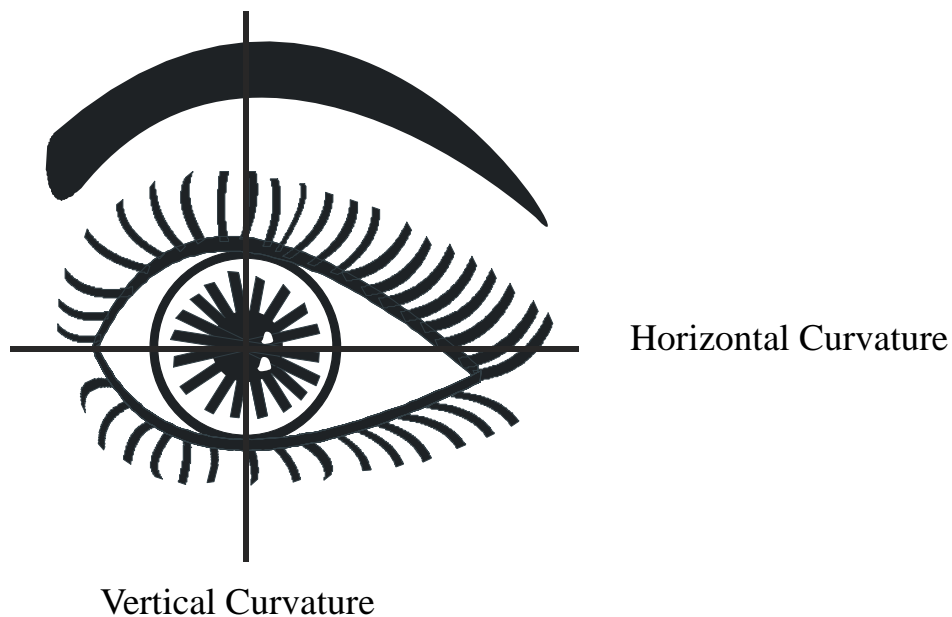
Astigmatism

Symptoms

Astigmatism may coexist with nearsightedness or farsightedness. In fact, their symptoms are quite similar except that people with astigmatism will complain of blurring in both near and distant vision. The higher the degree of astigmatism a person has, the more blurred the vision will become at all distances.

Formation

Astigmatism is present when the cornea curvature is irregular. Normally the cornea is a perfect sphere, but it is elliptically shaped in the astigmatic eye. In short, astigmatism occurs whenever the vertical curvature of the cornea is different from the horizontal.



Cause

Astigmatism is usually inherited. It may also be the result of environmental factors such as inadequate ambient lighting. You may have heard people say that excessive glare from a whiteboard and certain types of bulbs may cause astigmatism, but that is merely hearsay.

Preventive Measures

Although astigmatism is mainly hereditary, constant eye care can help to keep good vision.

1. Proper reading habit

- Keep a distance of at least 30 cm between the eyes and the reading material.
- Do not read lying in bed as you may move the book closer and closer to the eyes without noticing it.
- Do not read without adequate ambient lighting.
- Take a break every half hour of reading. Relax your eyes by looking at distant objects or closing the eyes.
- Do not play video games for more than an hour a day. The viewing distance should be 30 cm or more.

2. Optimal lighting

- Use ceiling lights when reading. Lighting should be even and bright but without excessive glare.
- For right-handed children, light from a desk lamp should be shone from the left upper corner when they are writing, and from the right upper corner for left-handers. Do not shine light directly into the eyes.
- Watch television with room light on and a viewing distance of at least six times the diagonal length of the screen.

3. Choose suitable printed material

- Poor quality printed material will cause eye strain. Words should be clearly printed; both the font size and the spacing should be appropriate.
- Glossy paper will produce glare and cause eye strain after prolonged reading.
- Dark-colored paper reduces clarity and makes reading difficult.

4. Eat healthy and keep your eyes healthy

- Have a balanced diet: eat more cereal, grains, vegetables and fruits as well as a moderate amount of meat, but eat less fat.
- Eat food rich in vitamin A (e.g. tomatoes and carrots) since it is good for your eyesight.
- Outdoor activities can relieve eye strain.
- Have adequate sleep to rest your eyes.

5. Have regular eye check-up and wear glasses when necessary

- Have vision test once a year. Wear glasses if the astigmatism affects your academic performance or daily life.
- Wearing glasses can make your vision clearer but it cannot help to cure or prevent astigmatism from worsening. On the contrary, not wearing properly prescribed spectacles will further affect your ability to see well and to do well in school.