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ASTIGMATISM

Astigmatism is a vision condition that causes blurred vision due either to the irregular shape of the cornea, the clear front cover of the eye, or sometimes the curvature of the lens inside the eye. An irregular shaped cornea or lens prevents light from focusing properly on the retina, the light sensitive surface at the back of the eye. As a result, vision becomes blurred at any distance.

Astigmatism is a very common vision condition. Most people have some degree of astigmatism. Slight amounts of astigmatism usually do not affect vision or require treatment. However, larger amounts may cause distorted or blurred vision, eye discomfort and headaches.

Astigmatism frequently occurs with other vision conditions like nearsightedness (myopia) and farsightedness (hyperopia). Together these vision conditions are referred to as refractive errors because they affect how the eyes bend or "refract" light.

The specific cause of astigmatism is unknown. It can be hereditary and is usually present from birth. It can change as a child grows and may decrease or worsen over time.

A comprehensive eye examination will include testing for astigmatism. Depending on the amount present, your doctor can provide eyeglasses or contact lenses that correct the astigmatism by altering the way light enters your eyes.

Another option for treating astigmatism uses a corneal modification procedure called orthokeratology (ortho-k). It is a painless, non-invasive procedure that involves wearing a series of specially designed rigid contact lenses to gradually reshape the curvature of the cornea.

Laser surgery is also a possible treatment option for some types of astigmatism. It changes the shape of the cornea by removing a small amount of eye tissue. This is done using a highly focused laser beam on the surface of the eye.