

Info sheet:

Refractive error

What is refractive error?

Refractive error is a common eye disorder that occurs when the eye cannot clearly focus on the images of objects looked at.

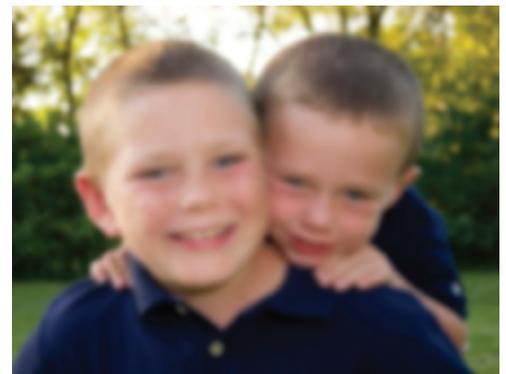
There are different types of refractive errors. For example, being 'short-sighted', 'long-sighted' or needing glasses to read as we get older (known as presbyopia) are common types of refractive errors.

Refractive error is usually corrected with glasses or contact lenses. If not corrected, it can cause vision impairment and interfere with daily activities such as driving and reading.

Uncorrected refractive error is the most common cause of vision impairment in Australia.



Normal vision



Example of how refractive error may affect vision

What are the symptoms?

- Blurred vision when looking into the distance or close up, some or all of the time.
- Some people may experience eye strain, fatigue, headaches or reduced concentration.
- Changes in vision are gradual. They are often not noticed until having an eye test.

Who is at risk?

- Refractive error can affect people of all ages.
- People with a family history of refractive error are more at risk.
- All types of refractive error can change over time. Presbyopia is more common with age.

What can be done?

- Have regular eye tests with an eye health professional (optometrist or ophthalmologist).
- Eye health professionals will usually prescribe glasses or contact lenses to correct and improve vision.
- Laser surgery can correct some forms of refractive error. This will not be an option for everyone.

Sight can change over time. If you already wear glasses or contact lenses, have regular eye tests and update your prescription when advised by your eye health professional.

Save Your Sight – Get Tested

For more information

- Speak to an eye health professional or GP.
- Visit www.visioninitiative.org.au

A Medicare rebate is available for most optometry services. You do not need a referral to see an optometrist. If required, your GP or optometrist can refer you to an ophthalmologist.

Some people may be eligible for subsidised, low-cost glasses. To find out more, call the Australian College of Optometry on 03 9349 7400 or visit www.aco.org.au

People with severe refractive error may need extra help to improve their vision. Speak to an eye health professional or your GP to find out more about the services and supports available.



A partnership promoting eye health and vision care



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