

Refractive error



What is refractive error?

Refractive error is a disorder, not a disease.

In order to see clearly, light entering the eye has to be refracted or bent by the lens of the eye to be focused clearly on the retina at the back of the eye.

This can be likened to a camera focusing an image on a film.

Refractive error means that the eye does not bend light correctly, resulting in blurred vision.

What are the symptoms of refractive error?

- Refractive error causes blurred vision.
- Vision may only be affected intermittently, depending on the type of refractive error and the activity being performed.
- Gradual changes in vision are seldom noticed until an eye test is performed by an eye health professional.

Who is at risk of refractive error?

- In 2009, it is estimated that over 341,000 Australians had correctable vision loss as a result of refractive error.
- All age groups can be affected by refractive error.
- People over the age of 40 should have regular eye tests to eliminate refractive error as a cause of any vision impairment.
- Refractive error can progress with age.
- Family history of refractive error is a risk factor.

What is the best defence against refractive error?

- Refractive error is simply corrected with glasses, contact lenses or refractive surgery.
- Regular eye examinations to detect any refractive error and wearing the prescribed glasses are the best way to prevent vision impairment from this condition.
- Updating glasses when advised by an eye health professional is important to ensure optimum vision.

Where to go for more information

Information on eye testing is available from general practitioners, optometrists or by referral to an ophthalmologist (medical eye specialist).

Subsidised low cost glasses are available in most states and territories. For more information visit your state or territory government website.

For more information on eye health visit www.visioninitiative.org.au