

Patient information

Glasses for children

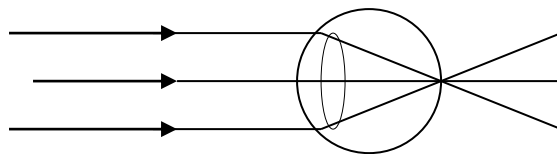
Why does my child need glasses?

Glasses may be prescribed for several reasons:

- To correct a refractive error, that makes the eyes unable to focus clearly
- To alter a squint
- To relieve symptoms such as eyestrain or headaches caused by muscle imbalance

Normal vision

Light, from everyday objects, enters the eye and is bent by the lens at the front of the eye. Light is then focused on the retina at the back of the eye giving a clear image.

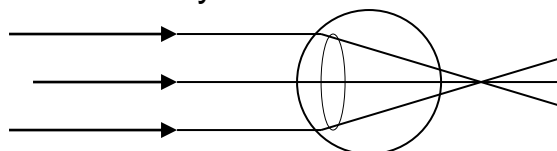


What are refractive errors?

A refractive error means the shape of the eye does not bend the light into focus on the back of the eye. The image that is seen is, therefore, blurred.

Hypermetropia – long sight

This occurs when the rays of light entering the eye are focused behind the retina. This is usually because the eyeball is too short.

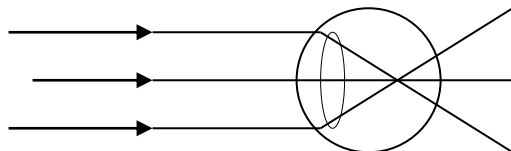


Objects at all distances appear blurred unless the eyes make an extra effort to focus. In some children this extra focusing effort may result in a squint.

Most children have some long sight whilst their eyes are growing and developing.

Myopia – short sight

This occurs when the rays of light entering the eye are focused in front of the retina.



Distance objects are blurred.

Astigmatism

This occurs when the cornea (the front surface of the eye) curves more in one direction than the other. The cornea can be described as being more like a rugby ball than a football. The vision is blurred for both near and distance objects. It is often combined with long or short sight. A cylindrical lens is needed to focus the light clearly onto the retina.

Anisometropia

This occurs when there is a difference in the refractive error of each eye. This results in blurred vision, especially in the eye with the greatest refractive error.

In children, the wearing of glasses alone does not always correct the vision. A patch may be required, covering the good eye, to encourage the eye with the weaker vision to develop.

Where do I get glasses?

Take your child and the NHS Prescription voucher to a dispensing Optician or Optometrist. It's against the law for anyone else to supply glasses for children. The optician will take measurements and help choose comfortable glasses that fit your child properly. There is no need for another eye test. Opticians stock many different frames so visit a few before deciding. Try someone close to home because you might need regular help with broken or lost spectacles.

How do I know if they fit?

The frame should be snug but not tight. It should not leave red marks on the nose, face or behind the ears. The arms should not be too long and the frame should not slip down. Go back to the optician if you notice any of these problems.

Lost, broken or bent?

Replacements, repairs and adjustments are often required. These should be done by the optician who made the glasses. Repairs and replacements are usually free but, if you paid extra for branded frames, tinted or thinner lenses, there may be a charge. You will be asked to sign a GOS4 form to claim a free repair or replacement.

Try to encourage your child to look after their glasses. They should try to:

- Use both hands to take the glasses off
- Try not to put the glasses down on the lens surface
- Keep the glasses in a case if not being worn

The hospital does not issue spare, repair or replacement vouchers. Claims for repairs or replacements are allowed for 24 months.

How often should glasses be worn?

In children, eight years and younger, glasses should be worn all day, every day. This is because there is a critical period for visual development. If refractive errors are not corrected, or compliance with the treatment is poor, then a permanent reduction in vision may occur. You will see the orthoptist 2 - 3 months after being given glasses; they will check your child's vision and glasses to see all is well.

What about sunglasses?

Other than in exceptional cases (when there is a medical condition which makes the eyes extra sensitive to sunlight) the hospital is not able to provide vouchers for sunglasses however you can purchase prescription sunglasses for your child if you wish.

What next?

The next appointment to check that the glasses lenses are correct is usually 12 – 18 months after your initial appointment.

To alter squints with glasses

If a young child is moderately long sighted the effort to focus and see clearly at close range, ie reading, may make one eye turn in and squint. This happens because the muscles needed to focus the lens in the eye are linked to the muscles that turn the eye in towards the nose.

Wearing the correct glasses allow the eye muscles to relax and the eye “straighten”. When both eyes are seeing clearly the child’s vision can develop normally.

To relieve symptoms such as eye strain and headaches

Children often say that they can see as well without their glasses as with them. This may well be true. Young children can over-exert the muscles in the eye and see clearly, but this puts a lot of stress on these muscles and can lead to eyestrain or headaches. Wearing glasses allows the muscles to relax and enables both eyes to see clearly so that the child’s vision can develop properly.

Will my child always need glasses?

This depends on the reason for wearing them.

- A small amount of long sight will need correcting while the eyes are developing but after, around the age of 10, it may be possible to manage without glasses
- Myopia (short sight) tends to increase with age. This means a child will usually continue to wear glasses
- Astigmatism can only be corrected by wearing glass
- Glasses may also continue to be needed where children have squints that are improved by wearing glasses or where surgery is not an option

Your orthoptist can advise you on your child’s individual case.