

Hyperopia (Long-Sightedness) in Children

What is long-sightedness?

Long-sightedness affects almost a quarter of the population. It occurs when either the eye-ball is too short or when the curve on the front of the eye (cornea) is too flat compared to a normal eye. As a result, the light entering the eye does not come to a focus by the time it reaches the back of the eye (retina).

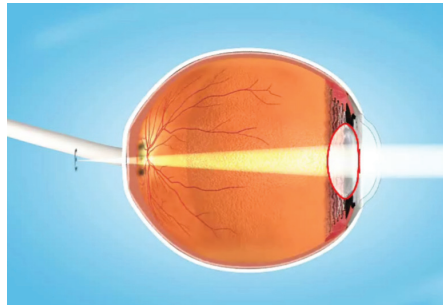
Young people with mild to moderate long-sightedness are able to see clearly in the distance because they can use the eyes' built-in focusing mechanism (the lens) to increase the focal power of the eye (accommodate) and bring the light into focus on the retina. However, they may have difficulties seeing near objects and reading. Children who are very long-sighted are at risk of developing a convergent squint (one eye points inwards) and may need to wear spectacles all the time.

What causes long-sightedness?

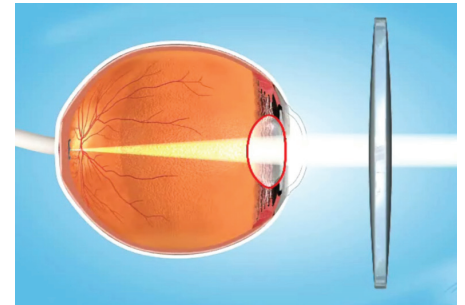
At birth the eyeball is small. As a result most infants are long-sighted to some degree. As the eyeball grows during the first few years of life, children usually grow out of their hyperopia. However in some cases the eye does not grow enough and long-sightedness persists. It is thought that long-sightedness is usually an inherited condition so a family history of long-sightedness is common.

Is your child long-sighted?

- Signs that a child may be long-sighted include:
- squinting when looking at close objects
- their eyes feel tired
- reluctance to read, or problems with reading.



Hyperopic eye (image out of focus)



Hyperopic eye with corrective lens (image in focus on retina)

- Eye strain and headaches when doing close work.

What treatment is available?

Long-sightedness in children can be corrected by spectacles and in some cases, contact lenses.

What happens if I just ignore the fact that my child is long-sighted?

Children with low degrees of long-sightedness may be able to manage without spectacles. Children with moderate long-sightedness are likely to require spectacles at least for close work. High degrees of long-sightedness can result in one of the eyes turning inwards (squint). If this happens the vision in this eye may not develop properly and the eye will become "lazy". In these cases it is essential that a child wears spectacles all the time. There is no evidence that wearing spectacles or contact lenses makes long-sightedness worse or that any form of eye exercises lessens the need for spectacles.

All children should have regular eye examinations to ensure optimum vision and to confirm the eyes are healthy. Your optometrist will provide an NHS eye examination free of charge for children under 16 years of age. Make an appointment today.

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