

South River Eye Care
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ASTIGMATISM

Astigmatism is the term in the eye care field probably most misunderstood by lay people.

To understand astigmatism one must realize that the front surface of the eye (as well as other structures and fluids inside the eye) bend light so they focus on the back of the eye. The eye is only about an inch long. Can you imagine a magnifying lens so powerful that it can focus sunlight in an inch?

How about if that lens were distorted? You would not get a sharp point focus but a distorted image. An example of that type of distortion would occur in one of those "fun house" mirrors that make you look too fat or wavy.

In astigmatism, usually the front surface of the eye, the cornea, is slightly "out of round" so that it is tangerine shaped instead of round like a crystal ball. The more "out of round" the cornea is the more astigmatism there is.

Astigmatism can affect the person in many ways from minor discomfort and slightly blurred vision to severe blur and discomfort.

Astigmatism can be a particular annoyance to someone who wishes to get contact lenses. A soft lens will drape itself around the tangerine shaped cornea becoming tangerine shaped itself, and not correct the astigmatism.

Soft lenses (called Toric lenses) have been designed to compensate for this problem. Also hard or rigid gas permeable lenses can be used since they do not drape the cornea allowing the tears to fill in the "out of roundness" between the back of the contact lens and the cornea.

Your eye care practitioner is well equipped to advise you about the care of the astigmatism by either spectacles or contact lenses.

For further information do not hesitate to contact our office.