

Hyperopia (Far-Sightedness)

A plain-English guide for you and your family

WHAT IS HAPPENING

Hyperopia, often called far-sightedness, means your eye has trouble focusing on things up close. Normally, the clear front of your eye (the cornea) and the lens inside bend incoming light so it lands exactly on the retina at the back—the retina is like the screen that captures the picture your brain sees. In hyperopia, the eyeball is a little too short from front to back, or the cornea and lens don't bend light quite enough. Either way, light rays try to meet at a point behind the retina instead of right on it. Nearby objects—like a book, your phone, or a label—look blurry because the light never comes to a sharp point on the retina. Faraway things may look clear because the eye doesn't have to bend light as much for distant objects. Mild hyperopia often goes unnoticed in children and young adults because the lens inside the eye is flexible and can squeeze itself to add extra bending power (a process called accommodation). Over time, especially after age 40, that lens gets stiffer and can't help as much, so near blur becomes more obvious and eye strain or headaches may start after reading or close work. Glasses or contact lenses with plus-power (convex) lenses add the extra bending needed to bring light forward onto the retina. For adults who want a permanent fix, laser surgery (LASIK or PRK) can reshape the cornea to increase its focusing power. Hyperopia is very common—about one in four adults has it—and it runs in families. It's not dangerous, but untreated hyperopia in young children can lead to lazy eye (amblyopia) or crossed eyes (esotropia) because the brain and eye muscles struggle to keep near vision clear. That's why pediatricians and optometrists check children's eyes early, even if the child isn't complaining.

What you might feel

- Blurry vision when looking at close objects (books, phones, sewing)
- Clear vision when looking at distant objects (road signs, a TV across the room)
- Eye strain, aching, or tired feeling in and around the eyes (especially after reading or screen time)
- Headache (often frontal, around the forehead)
- Difficulty concentrating or reading for long periods
- Squinting or rubbing eyes frequently

- Crossed eyes (esotropia) or lazy eye (amblyopia) in young children

Call the doctor right away if...

- Sudden loss of vision or a dark curtain falling over part of the vision (may signal retinal detachment, especially in high hyperopia where the retina is under extra stress)
- Eye pain with nausea, vomiting, or seeing halos around lights (may signal acute angle-closure glaucoma—hyperopic eyes have shallower front chambers and higher risk)
- One eye turning in (crossing) in a child under age 8 (needs urgent referral to prevent permanent vision loss from amblyopia)

What the care team will do

- Screen visual acuity using a standard eye chart at both near and far distances.
- Teach the patient that glasses or contact lenses can correct hyperopia by adding extra focusing power to bend light correctly onto the retina.
- Encourage regular eye exams, especially for children and adults over 40.
- Assess for signs of eye strain, such as frequent headaches, tired eyes, or difficulty concentrating on close tasks.
- Refer promptly to an eye doctor if the patient reports sudden vision changes, eye pain, or sees flashes or floaters.

Where this information comes from

- American Academy of Ophthalmology (AAO) Preferred Practice Patterns
- American Optometric Association (AOA) Evidence-Based Clinical Practice Guideline
- Cochrane Eyes and Vision
- American Association for Pediatric Ophthalmology and Strabismus (AAPOS)

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