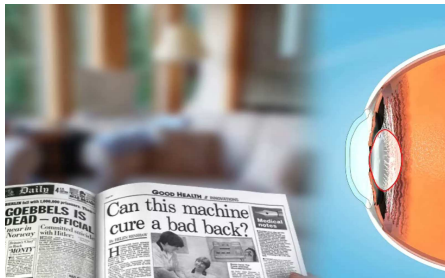


PRESBYOPIA

Q What is presbyopia?

A Presbyopia is the gradual decline in the eyes' ability to change focus from distance to close-up, caused by the hardening of the lens within the eye. Although the process begins in early adulthood, most people first notice the problem when they reach their mid-forties, when they can no longer focus on objects at the normal reading distance.



Q Who is affected?

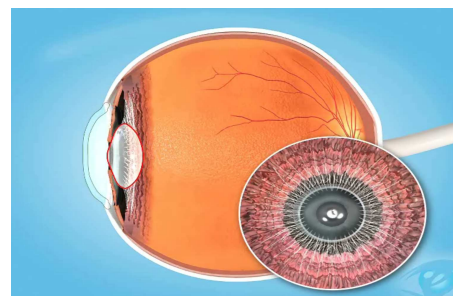
A Everybody! The hardening of the lens affects everybody although the exact age when it reaches the stage when spectacles are required for reading varies to some extent.

There is no evidence that eye exercises or diet affects the development or progression of presbyopia in any way.

Q What causes presbyopia?

A The ability to change focus from distance to close-up is dependent on the lens which lies just behind the pupil in the eye. The lens in a young eye has an elastic capsule filled with a jelly-like substance. It is suspended by some fine 'strings' within a circular muscle known as the ciliary muscle. When this muscle constricts, the tension on the strings is reduced and the elastic capsule causes the lens to bulge out. This increases the power of the lens and allows near objects to be focused on the back of the eye (retina).

Throughout life the lens get thicker and less supple which in turn means that it becomes more difficult to focus on near objects. The closest point that you can focus on gets further and further away until you can no longer see at your normal reading distance.



Q What treatment is available?

A Presbyopia can be easily corrected by spectacles. If you do not wear spectacles for looking in the distance you will just require spectacles for close work. However, it is important to note that you will not be able to see clearly when you look in the distance when wearing these glasses.

If you already wear spectacles for looking in the distance, you will require a second pair for reading. Alternatively, you might consider bifocal or progressive lenses which contain a distance and reading prescription in one lens.

Contact lenses are available to correct presbyopia but as yet there is no proven surgical procedure available.

Your optometrist will be able to advise on the best solution for your eyes.