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Bifocal Contact Lenses – Improving vision

By Martin Smith

Thick lenses with a line across them were the only option available to those who had

nearsightedness and farsightedness. The frames for glasses in general were heavy and very unattractive. The problem with wearing bifocals was getting used to them. You need to look either up or look down especially going down stairs. Adjusting to wearing bifocals made some people feel dizzy.

People had only one choice if they wore bifocals, eyeglasses. When contacts hit the market bifocals still had to be in eyeglasses. That was then and this is now. Those who wear eyeglasses may have far fewer choices than those who wear contact lenses may. Many people are happy because now contact lenses come in contact lenses. Contact bifocals are available in rigid, soft, and gas permeable materials.

Who needs to wear bifocal contact lenses? People focusing on near objects who have trouble. The name of what they suffer with is Presbyopia. Over the age of 40 is when this usually happens.

Alternating Design and Bifocal Eyeglasses are alike because one half of the lens enables distance vision and the other allows you to see near. Lenses that try to blend both near and distance prescriptions fill in the pupil area and are called Simultaneous Design. Your eyes will learn to interpret the circle power choices depending on how near or far you are looking.

The radial of contact lenses is the concentric design lens. The inner lens will work on either the nearness vision or the distant vision and so can the outer part of the lens.

Translating design contacts are similar to bifocal eyeglasses where the distant correction is above the nearness vision correction. A line makes the lenses separate. The bottom of the lens is flat to keep it from moving around in your eye when you blink.

Both distant and near vision are located at the center of the Aspheric Design lenses. The near correction in the center is surrounded by distance correction.

Sometimes they can be reversed in some situations. You and your doctor can decide that.

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With mono-vision design lenses you have one power lens in one eye and then the other power lens in the other eye. Usually the distant vision lens is worn in the dominant eye. An examination by your doctor will be able to determine this.

There are also simultaneous vision lenses. Your eyes can focus on things that are both near and far at the same time. Distant and near correction is concentric rings. The near and far parts of the lens are in sight all the time so the light from both distant and near objects can be focused on at the same time.

Simultaneous vision contact lenses have a problem. The light from the near part of the lens will go through the distant part and vice versa when the eye is looking through it. Both in focus and out of focus can be taken in by the eye at the same time.

The brain has to figure out which is the correct image. Whether contact lenses are bifocals or not, you must obtain a prescription. Your eye doctor will do a very thorough exam to decide if you are a

candidate for bifocal contacts and what type might be right for you.

Lenses that fit and are comfortable may take time to find, as with any contact lens there is an adjustment. Bifocal lenses may not be for you, at least not in the contact lenses currently available.

There may be contact lenses out there, don't give up. Do your research if you really want contacts and need bifocals and keep informed on the types of lenses available to you. There are resources available online, through your eye care physician, and in some cases right from the manufacturer.

There are discount websites for contact lenses and some manufacturers will give you a coupon for their lenses if you try them. Your budget will affect your decision about bifocal lenses without a doubt.

Check with friends and family who wear contacts and see what their experience was like. Although not everyone has the same experience, the information could help you and your doctor make the decision. Bifocal contact lenses are available now for people with astigmatism.

Toric contact lenses come in both color and disposable lenses. Check with your eye doctor about Toric lenses because some professionals are uncomfortable fitting them.

Martin Smith is a successful freelance writer providing advice for consumers on purchasing a variety of products which includes

Bifocal Contact Lenses

and

Contact Lenses

, and more! His numerous articles provide a wonderfully researched resource of

interesting and relevant information.

Bifocal Contact Lenses for Presbyopia

By Dr Bianca Tavares

Developments in the field of contact lens technology are producing ever better contact lenses that are increasingly convenient to wear throughout the whole gamut of vision conditions and lifestyles. Bifocal contact lenses are today available to correct presbyopia, a common problem in the over-40 age group.

Presbyopia is a vision condition in which the eyes are not able to focus clearly on near objects. It usually begins after the age of about forty when the lenses in the eye start reducing in flexibility. Presbyopia affects around 90 million adults in the USA alone and about one in four patients passing through an optometrist's door will suffer from it.

Symptoms of presbyopia include difficulty in reading, difficulty in seeing in low lighting conditions and, occasionally, headaches.

Traditionally these vision problems were addressed with the old-fashioned reading glasses. Or existing eyeglass wearers could opt for bifocal eyeglasses. However the use of modern contact lenses for use with presbyopia has some distinct advantages beyond their cosmetic appeal. For example they can be well suited to other aspects of a wearer's lifestyle such as sporting activities, exercising or using a computer.

Recently, contact lenses for correcting presbyopia have become available in more convenient types such as disposable or frequent replacement varieties. Today these are very popular lens types providing obvious benefits for the wearer.

HOW CONTACT LENSES CORRECT PRESBYOPIA

From a technical perspective, there are three distinct ways by which contact lenses can be used to correct presbyopia, each with advantages and disadvantages for particular types of patient. But the important thing here is that there is a choice and each wearer is likely to find one method best suited to their unique situation. The different contact lens methods are as follows:

MONOVISION

The monovision technique involves using in one eye a lens for seeing near objects and in the other eye a lens for seeing distant objects. Many people find that monovision works very well for them. It relies on the brain's ability to selectively process and combine information from the best available sources in order to provide the clearest possible vision. In some instances, the optometrist might employ a bifocal lens in one eye and a normal distance lens in the other. The main problem associated with monovision is the apparent loss of depth of vision for some patients.

BIFOCAL CONTACT LENSES

As with traditional bifocal eyeglasses, each lens in bifocal contact lenses possesses two powers - one for seeing near objects, the other for distant objects. Some types of bifocal lenses when magnified look a little like a bull's eye with an central inner zone surrounded by the outer zone. The drawback to this

type of lens is that in certain conditions of reduced lighting, the vision might not always be as sharp in certain areas.

MULTIFOCAL CONTACT LENSES

Multifocal contact lenses work very much like the progressive lenses for eyeglasses. These lenses possess several zones of differing power in order to assist the eye gradually as it changes its focus on different objects at different distances. Therefore these lenses are designed to function well for seeing near, intermediate and distant objects. Their drawbacks are typically the same as for bifocal contact lenses, with occasional loss of visual acuity.

Bifocal lenses are available in two basic design types, 'Translating' and 'Simultaneous', the essential characteristics of which are as follows:

TRANSLATING BIFOCAL LENSES

Another name for the translating lens type is an 'alternating lens'. Gas Permeable bifocal lenses are regularly of this type. Their usage is very much like that of traditional bifocal eyeglasses. The wearer will look through one zone for distance vision then `translate' to look through the other zone for near vision. Both zones aren't looked through at the same time.

SIMULTANEOUS BIFOCAL LENSES

The majority of soft bifocal contact lenses on the market are of the 'simultaneous' type. As the name implies, with simultaneous lenses the wearer actually looks through the various powers of the lenses at the same time. What happens is that the brain steps in and `suppresses' the power or powers, which aren't needed at that particular time in order to see clearly. There exist further subdivisions of this lens type, but we won't go into the details in this brief overview.

As with all contact lens selection and wear, choosing the right type of bifocal lens depends equally as much upon the wearer's unique lifestyle as his unique vision characteristics. For example a patient who regularly undertakes sporting activities will have different needs from one who only needs to wear them socially or for use at work.

However, the success of adopting bifocal contact lenses relies very much on the expectations of the wearer who should realize that, almost by definition, bifocal lenses are very much a compromise and that he or she is never going to regain the acuity of vision in all environments that they had when younger. In most cases this is perfectly acceptable and bifocal lenses have now earned their place in the optometrist's ever-expanding repertoire.

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BY DR. BIANCA TAVARES

Dr. Tavares is a medical consultant with wide-ranging experience and interests in both traditional and complementary medicine and health care.

She has a particular passion for disseminating quality medical information to the people who matter - the patients - and acts in an advisory capacity to numerous journals and health related web sites. Her writing about eye health and

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