



RE: Keratoconus and Contact Lenses

Keratoconus is a progressive eye disease in which degenerative thinning of cornea results in complex irregular bulging of the normally round, spherical cornea (the clear covering in front of the eye). Keratoconus results in grossly distorted vision, similar to looking through a car's windshield while driving in a rainstorm without using windshield wipers. Keratoconus is characterized by thinning and protrusion of the central cornea resulting in visual distortion, photophobia, halos, decreased vision, glare, ghosting and sometimes monocular diplopia (double vision).

For those who have keratoconus, their vision is affected by progressively decreased visual acuity and distortion *which cannot be corrected with spectacles or conventional contact lenses*. However, most keratoconus patients can achieve functional vision with the use of specially designed therapeutic contact lenses.

Keratoconus is one of the few conditions where contact lenses are a medical necessity (other conditions include unilateral aphakia, post corneal transplant, and very high myopia). It is well documented that specialty contact lenses, rigid gas permeable designs, hybrid lenses or a combination of a rigid gas permeable lens riding on a soft lens configuration are the treatment of choice for keratoconus.

These uniquely designed keratoconic lenses improve vision by providing a clear optical lens that masks the distorted areas of the cornea creating a smooth, regular optical surface over the patient's very irregular, cone-shaped cornea. These lenses can correct the distorted vision caused by keratoconus and can provide the required visual acuity necessary to perform daily routines. Without these corrective lenses these patients are visually handicapped. They would not be able to perform even the simplest tasks of daily life: read, drive a car, attend school or even recognize a face across the room.

Spectacles cannot achieve these results. The lenses in a pair of glasses are too far away from the optical surface of the cornea to create the smooth refractive surface necessary to translate the image clearly to the back of the eye and to the brain.

These therapeutic contact lenses are not cosmetic. They are specially designed devices that treat a medical disease: Keratoconus. Just as a leg brace helps a lame patient to walk, these specially designed contact lenses provide those with keratoconus the ability to see.

The only other therapeutic option for rehabilitating vision for the keratoconus patient is penetrating keratoplasty (corneal transplant surgery). Because of the inherent risks with surgery and high cost, this option is only reserved for severe cases where corrective lenses can no longer improve vision to useful levels.

Based on the above information about keratoconus, we trust that you will deem these corrective lenses medically necessary and worthy of a higher insurance rebate than currently being offered to this patient with keratoconus.

For more information about keratoconus please visit our internet website at: www.keratoconus.asn.au. If you have questions or wish further information about keratoconus contact Keratoconus Australia by email at: info@keratoconus.asn.au

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