

# Keratoconus

This material will help you understand keratoconus, its causes, and how it may be treated.

## What is keratoconus?

Keratoconus is a condition that causes the cornea to thin and bulge out like a cone over time. The cornea is the clear window in the front of the eye (see picture on the right). Its dome shape helps to focus light into your eye. When the shape of the cornea changes, your eye cannot focus as well and vision becomes blurry and distorted.

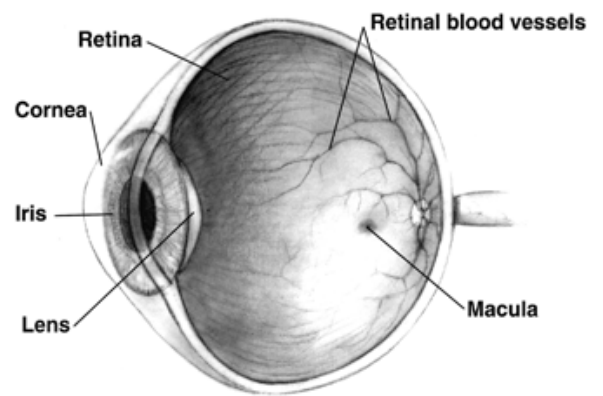


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This may make daily tasks such as reading or driving more difficult.

Keratoconus progresses over time as the cornea becomes thinner and steeper. The rate of this progression varies from person to person. It usually takes place over 10-20 years and then stops. At this point, the disease is considered stable.

## What causes keratoconus?

The cause of keratoconus is unknown at this time. It may be genetic (passed down in families) in some cases. It usually begins in people who are in their late teens to early 20s.

## What are the symptoms of keratoconus?

Keratoconus often affects both eyes, but one may be worse than the other. In the early stages of keratoconus, symptoms may include:

- Blurred and distorted vision
- Increased sensitivity to light and glare
- Mild irritation

In later stages, symptoms may include:

- Increased blurring and distortion of vision
- Increased nearsightedness or astigmatism (when your eye cannot focus as well)
- Needing to change your prescription often
- No longer being able to wear contact lenses

After a period of time, keratoconus becomes stable. This means that your symptoms will not get any worse.

### **How is keratoconus treated?**

Treatment for keratoconus varies depending on how bad your symptoms are. Mild cases may be treated with eyeglasses or special contact lenses to correct vision.

If your case is more advanced, other options include:

- **PROSE** (Prosthetic Rehabilitation of the Ocular Surface Ecosystem): This is a hard object similar to a contact lens that is fit to your eye. It helps create a healthy surface over the misshaped cornea.
- **Intacs**: These are small devices that your eye doctor puts into your eye during a surgical procedure. They work to flatten and reshape your cornea to help improve vision.

- **Corneal Cross Linking:** This is for early and progressive keratoconus using ultraviolet light and a vitamin dye. They help to decrease the progression by causing the cornea to become stiff.
- **Corneal Transplant:** If your symptoms are severe and other treatments are not improving your vision, your eye doctor may recommend a corneal transplant. This is when all or part of your cornea is removed and replaced with healthy donor cornea tissue.

It is important to try not to rub your eyes. This can damage the cornea tissue and make your symptoms worse.

You and your eye doctor will discuss the treatment option that is best for you.

**For more information, scan these codes with your smartphone or visit the websites listed.**



<http://www.kellogg.umich.edu/patientcare/conditions/keratoconus.html>



<http://www.geteyesmart.org/eyesmart/diseases/keratoconus.cfm>

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