

Bifocals/Trifocals

What is a multifocal lens?

A multifocal lens is a lens that contains two or more prescriptions for correcting vision at different distances. These include bifocals, trifocals, and special occupational lenses.

Why are multifocal lenses prescribed?

Not all people see well at all distances. Bifocals (“bi” meaning two) are prescribed to aid both near and far vision. Trifocals (“tri” meaning three) are prescribed to aid near, far and middle distance seeing. As people reach their early to mid-forties, their eyes gradually lose their ability to focus on objects that are close up. As a result, multifocal lenses are often prescribed to adjust to these changes.

Aren’t bifocals/trifocals just for older people?

No. Multifocal lenses are the correction of choice for certain conditions for children, teens and young adults. Occasionally a young person’s most clear, comfortable and efficient near vision requires a lens power different for the necessary distance correction.

Can I get rid of the telltale line in the middle of my lenses?

Those lines can be eliminated with “no-line” or “progressive addition lenses”. They gradually change in power from the distance segment to the near vision segment. These progressive lenses are the most advanced, multi-functional of any bifocal/trifocal and many people prefer the cosmetic value of no lines.

Don’t bifocals/trifocals indicate a serious vision problem?

The gradual decrease in the ability of the eyes to focus is a natural part of the aging process. Multifocal lenses merely correct for these changes. Currently, over half of all lenses worn in Canada are multifocal.

Why do multifocal eye glasses cost more than regular eyeglasses?

Eyeglasses are precision optical devices and must be made with the utmost care and skill. Additional time and skill is also needed in the measurements taken to accurately order the lenses and in dispensing them to you. Multifocal lens technology is ever improving and changing.

I currently wear contact lenses. Will I have to give them up?

Bifocal contact lenses are available. In addition, the technique of mono vision (using one eye for close vision and one eye for distant vision) is becoming more common). Reading glasses may also be used in addition to contact lenses to adjust to vision changes. Check with your Doctor of Optometry.

What are some suggestions for adapting to multifocal lenses?

- Don't look at your feet when walking.
- Hold reading material closer to your body and lower your eyes so that you are reading out of the lowest part of your lenses.
- Fold your newspaper in half or quarters and move it, rather than your head when reading.
- Wear your multifocal continuous for the first week or two, until your eyes are accustomed to them, even though you may not need them for all tasks.
- Make sure that eyeglass frames are always adjusted for your face so that the lenses are properly positioned.