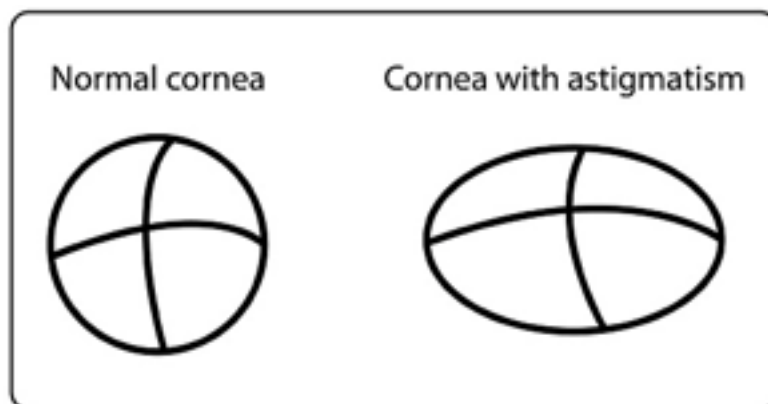




Astigmatism:

ASTIGMATISM may be one of the most misunderstood words in the English language! To illustrate what Astigmatism really is, compare an egg to a ping-pong ball, or a football to a basketball. Because they are not perfectly round, the egg and the football have lots of astigmatism, whereas the ping-pong ball and the basketball have none.

Similarly, two round surfaces in the eye are responsible for focusing light: the clear outer window of the eye called the CORNEA and the LENS, which resides just behind the colored part of the eye (the IRIS). If one or both of these surfaces are NOT perfectly spherical or round, we say that astigmatism is present.



The usual site of this irregularity in the eye is the cornea. It is normal variant and, if present, may be considered one of nature's imperfections. Rarely astigmatism is caused by lid swellings such as chalazia and corneal scars, or by keratoconus (a rare condition in which the cornea becomes mishap pen and pointed rather than smooth and rounded).

ASTIGMATISM may cause blurred vision, squinting, eye strain, or even headaches. Small amounts of astigmatism can be ignored, but if any of its symptoms are present, astigmatism can be corrected by glasses or contact lenses. In most patients hard contact lenses do a better job of correcting for astigmatism than do soft contact lenses.

*Information from the National Eye Institute & the American Optometric Association