



How Can Glasses Make My Child's Eyes Straight?

There are very different causes of crossed-eyes. Some children's eyes cross because they are farsighted.

To understand how this is possible, we must first understand how a normal eye works. Eyes usually have the ability to focus on objects at any distance. When the eyes view something far away, it is in a relaxed state. As objects move closer to the eye, it begins to exert effort to focus by using a lens in the eye which can become thicker and more powerful to help us see at near distances. The lens is controlled by a muscle. The more this lens muscle flexes itself, the thicker and more powerful the lens can become.

As an object moves closer to us, the eyes not only need to exert effort to focus to see the object, but they also need to turn inward to stay aligned on that object. How far inward the eyes move depends upon how close the object is. One of the ways the brain determines how far inward the eyes need to turn to stay fixed upon an object is by sensing how hard the muscle that flexes the lens is working to keep the object in focus.

If a person is farsighted, they can often use the focusing power of the lens inside the eye to see clearly. They do this by over-flexing the lens muscle. When the eyes flex their lenses this much, the brain interprets the greater amount of focusing taking place as the need to look at an object which is **closer** than the object actually is. Since the signal for how far inward to cross comes from the lens' muscle, and the muscle is flexing harder than normal, the eyes turn in further than normal. The child's eyes cross.

Since the crossing is tied to focusing, this explains why the eyes might not cross all the time. The eyes only cross when the eyes are focusing too much in order to overcome their farsightedness. The solution is to put the child in a farsighted glasses prescription. These glasses will ease the focusing burden from the farsighted eyes and allow them to focus properly. Once the normal need for focusing is restored to the eyes by glasses, they will maintain their alignment.

Children are frequently unaware of any problem with their eyes. They don't realize they need glasses because their eyes may be able to strain enough to see clearly. Such a child may say they see just as well without their glasses, but they do this by straining which causes the crossing.

Sometimes children report they see worse with their new glasses. Children also notice this if they do not wear them consistently. The farsighted eye needs time to adjust to glasses. The effort the eyes exert trying to see clearly before getting glasses often results in a spasm of the eye's lens which may take days to relax. The only solution is to wear the glasses consistently until the eyes adjust. Once the glasses are worn for a few days, vision should be clear.

Some parents worry that relying upon glasses may lead to stronger glasses prescriptions in the future. In reality, many farsighted children have their prescriptions reduced over time, and some even outgrow their need for glasses. Speak to your Physician or Orthoptist for an idea of what your child should expect.

If a child continues to resist glasses wear, please call our office. We may offer to check your prescription or suggest methods to encourage glasses wear.