What is Astigmatism?

Astigmatism is an eye condition in which the cornea, the clear front surface of the eye, is football shaped as opposed to the shape of a round basketball. In some cases, it is the lens inside the eye that causes the distortion but in either case, vision is blurry. This irregularity affects the way light focuses on the retina, the light sensitive tissue in the back of the eye, and can cause blurred vision at all distances.

Regular astigmatism is a fairly common and mild eye condition. Astigmatism is also usually congenital, but it can also develop after an eye injury or eye surgery. Small degrees of astigmatism do not require treatment, however, larger amounts of astigmatism may require corrective lenses as a form of treatment.

Irregular astigmatism, is caused by irregularities on the cornea. This can be caused by scars on the cornea from trauma or from corneal diseases. Treatment for irregular astigmatism can generally be accomplished with rigid gas permeable contact lenses.

How can astigmatism be diagnosed? A comprehensive eye examination includes tests for astigmatism. During a refraction, the optometrist places different lenses in front of the patient’s eyes to measure how they focus light and based on the patient’s responses, finds a prescription that provides the patient with the best vision.