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ORTHOKERATOLOGY: “Ortho-K”

The Process:

The process involves wearing a specially-designed rigid gas permeable contact lens overnight, which temporarily reshapes your cornea for mild to moderate amounts of nearsightedness and small amounts of astigmatism. Typically near-sighted eyes have corneas that are too steep and focus light in front of retina. “Ortho-K” works by gently flattening these steep corneas so that light is focused directly on the retina. This entire process is completely reversible simply by discontinuing lens wear.

How it Works:

Patients wear the “ortho-k” contact lenses overnight and while asleep they work on re-shaping the cornea. Upon awakening, the lenses are removed and the patient’s distance vision is clear. These lenses do have a “break-in” time where they will give good distance vision the first day for a few hours before the cornea will resume its original shape, making patients near-sighted again. However, upon continuously wearing the ortho-k contact lenses each night this effect will gradually improve over a period of several weeks, giving good vision throughout all daytime hours. Some patients eventually may be able to wear these lenses on an every-other-night basis and still retain adequate distance vision. Recent studies have proven that ortho-k helps slow down the progression of (myopia) near-sightedness in children.

Normal Expectations:

It is important to note that during the initial break-in period of several weeks, patients who are more moderately near-sighted will tend to notice their distance vision becoming blurry more toward the latter hours of the day and may notice their vision isn’t as sharp as it was with their previous glasses or contact lenses. These patients may require a small distance glasses prescription for certain activities such as driving at night due to glare, halos, and distance blur. Initially, some mild discomfort will be expected with patients who are wearing gas permeable contacts for the first time. Patient’s eyelids will need to build up a callous to improve this mild discomfort, which is usually achieved within three weeks of full-time lens wear. It’s more of the blink interaction where patients will notice this discomfort so the discomfort won’t be as noticeable with the eyes closed while sleeping.

Office Visit Follow-ups:

Ortho-K is a much longer process than a normal daytime contact lens fitting. Expect to have several office visits to monitor how the lenses are affecting the corneas, to make sure the lenses are fitting the eyes properly and what the vision will become once the contact lenses are removed. Initially, patients will receive 1 pair of ortho-K lenses, which will be good six months. Follow-up appointments will be done first thing in the morning and patients will need to wear their lenses into their appointment so that our doctors can evaluate how they are doing. Generally, patients can expect to have a one-day follow-up, 1-week follow-up, 2-week follow-up, 4-week follow-up, 8-week follow-up, 12-week follow-up, and 6-month follow-up. This schedule may change depending on each individual patient’s needs. At the six-month follow-up, patients can order a 2nd set of lenses at a discounted rate to get them through the rest of the first year of ortho-k fitting. After this 2nd set of lenses is ordered, the follow-up schedule will include a one-week follow-up.

Pricing for Contacts & Follow-ups only (does not include exam or fitting fees):

\$1100 upfront covers cost on 1 pair of ortho-k lenses and all follow-ups that are required for an adequate fit and functional vision. At the 6-month follow-up patients can purchase another pair of the ortho’k lenses at a discounted rate of \$600, which will get them through their first year of ortho-k wear. Unfortunately, vision or medical insurance does not cover associated ortho-k costs. Patients who continue in the program will be able to purchase additional sets of ortho-k lenses every 6 months for the discounted \$600 fee. Once again, this fee will include the one week follow-up. Additionally, annual ocular health examinations will be required and patients can still use their insurance for these appointments.

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