nh optometrist

shop 1 : plattekloof village : cnr plattekloof & baronetcy blvd : plattekloof : 7500 : cape town : south africa
tel +27 21 558 4696 : fax 086 678 5318 : www.nhoptometrist.co.za

Night Vision

Who suffers from night vision problems?

Most of us are aware that driving at night is more demanding and stressful than driving in the daytime. We make natural compensations for this as we drive but it is a fact that the number of night and road accidents is much greater than those that occur during the day.

What is night myopia?

Some years ago, the term 'night myopia' was first used and some people advocated special night driving glasses to correct it. Myopia is what is generally known as short sight. Short-sighted people can see near objects clearly while distant objects are blurred. It is a problem that occurs in all conditions and light levels but research has shown that, at very low light levels, well below those experienced when driving at night with headlights on, younger people with otherwise perfect vision become temporarily myopic.

What causes this change?

Normally people below the age of about 40-45 can adjust the focus of their eyes between long and short distance at will. However, in very dark conditions this system breaks down and the focus of the eyes settles to a constant distance of about 1m.

But surely this means that special glasses are required for night driving?

Yes, that is logical reasoning and it is true that, if a driver's eyes were constantly focused at 1m, the distant road ahead and on-coming traffic would appear blurred. Fortunately, however, we do not suffer this fixed focus. Modern road and vehicle lighting provides sufficient light for the focusing system of the eye to work normally: even when there is no overhead street lighting.

Even so things do look a little blurred when I drive at night!

Road lighting levels at night are obviously lower than those found by day. This causes the pupil of the eye to become larger during night driving than under brighter conditions and the increase in pupil size can accentuate any existing small errors in focusing, causing blur. If you notice such a blur, your current glasses or contact lenses may need changing or you may need an optical correction. Your optometrist can advise you on this.

Reference:
The College of Optometrists, the professional, scientific and examining body for optometry in the UK. People who are our members agree to meet the highest clinical and ethical standards. Look for the letters MCOptom to see if your optometrist is a member.

nh optometrist

shop 1 : plattekloof village : cnr plattekloof & baronetcy blvd : plattekloof : 7500 : cape town : south africa
tel +27 21 558 4696 : fax 086 678 5318 : www.nhoptometrist.co.za

I've had my glasses checked but notice haloes and reflections around lights and headlights make my eyes feel uncomfortable. What can I do about this?

The most common reason for haloes and reflections is a dirty windscreen (both inside and out). In the same way scratched or dirty spectacle lenses can contribute to unwanted scattered light, as can condensation on any of these surfaces. It is a good idea always to clean your windscreen and glasses before night driving. Reflections from the surfaces of spectacle lenses can sometimes cause multiple images of lights at night. If you notice these, effective anti-reflection lens coatings are available. Ask your optometrist for details.

Is it just part and parcel of growing old?

Unfortunately a variety of changes in the eye can contribute to discomfort from glare during night driving, particularly among older drivers. This is commonly caused by cataracts which produce effects similar to looking through a dirty window. Spectacles can do nothing to overcome this and it may be sensible to minimise night driving. If you are affected by oncoming headlights, try concentrating on the nearside kerb as you drive - but don't forget to reduce your speed!

I've seen amber night driving glasses advertised in the press. Do they help?

There is no evidence that these lenses improve vision on the road, indeed tinted lenses may actually make vision worse. Windscreen tints have the same effect and this is why is not advisable to use any form of tint at night.

What about the blue night driving lights advertised for use within the car?

These cause the eye pupil to contract and may therefore reduce the glare from approaching headlights but they also make it harder to see the road ahead. They are not recommended.

What should I do to make sure that I can see as well as possible when driving at night?

- Make sure that your eyes are examined regularly
- Always wear an up-to-date pair of distance spectacles or contact lenses
- Keep a spare pair in the car if possible
- Do not use tinted lenses but have them anti-reflection coated if necessary
- Don't forget to keep the windscreen clean, inside and out, at all times
- Make sure your car's lighting is working properly

Finally, if in doubt about the fitness of your vision for driving at night, seek your optometrist's advice.

Reference:
The College of Optometrists, the professional, scientific and examining body for optometry in the UK. People who are our members agree to meet the highest clinical and ethical standards. Look for the letters MCOptom to see if your optometrist is a member.