

## Vision and driving

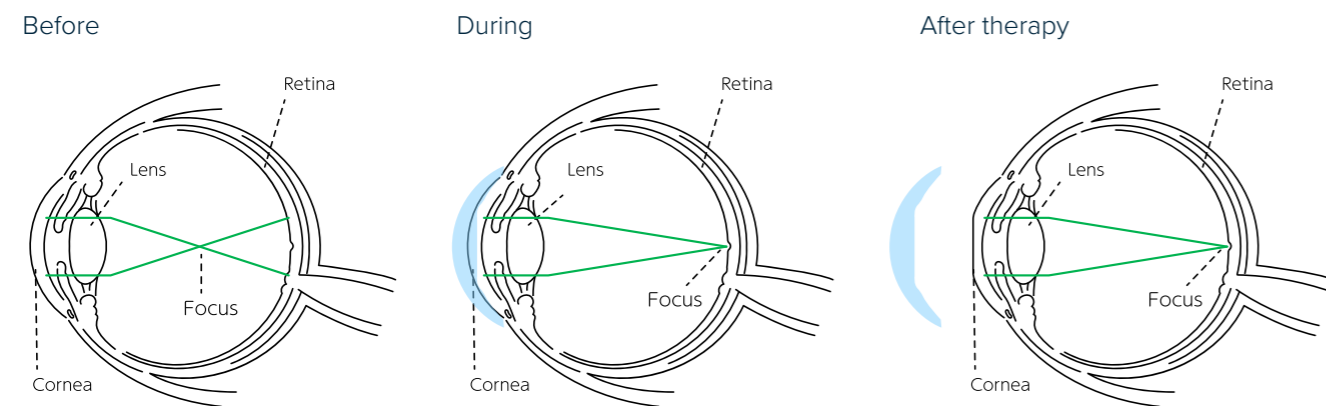
# Common questions about orthokeratology therapy

All drivers need good vision to see and respond to other vehicles, signs, signals, other road users (including pedestrians and cyclists) and hazards. Good vision is particularly important to safely complete manoeuvres such as lane changing, merging and negotiating intersections.

The national driving standards, *Assessing Fitness to Drive*, set out the vision requirements for private and commercial drivers. These include requirements for visual acuity (sharpness or clarity of vision) and visual fields (the extent of your vision such as side vision).

The 2022 edition of *Assessing Fitness to Drive* includes information about how orthokeratology therapy can be used to meet the visual acuity standards. This fact sheet explains orthokeratology and the important things to consider for safe driving.

## What is orthokeratology?



Orthokeratology is a therapy that involves the fitting of specially designed contact lenses that you wear overnight. While you sleep, the lenses slowly and gently reshape the front of your eyes (cornea) so you can see clearly the following day.

Specially trained eye care professionals most commonly prescribe these lenses to correct short-sightedness (myopia), and to slow the progression of myopia in children. They can also be used to treat far-sightedness and astigmatism.

## Is it a new therapy?

While orthokeratology has not previously been referred to in *Assessing Fitness to Drive*, it is an established therapy, which has been used in its present form for more than 20 years. There are however some things to consider in relation to driving, and that is why the therapy is now mentioned in the driving standard.

## What do I need to know about orthokeratology and driving?

One of the important things to understand about orthokeratology is that the effect on your vision is temporary, so the lenses usually need to be worn each night to maintain the vision required for driving.

The effect of orthokeratology slowly wears off as the cornea regains its usual shape. To ensure suitable correction throughout the day, the orthokeratology prescription will usually be slightly higher than required for normal glasses or contact lenses so that your vision still meets the requirements for driving at the end of the day.

**If you forget or are unable to wear the lenses at night, you must make sure you wear other suitable corrective lenses to drive.** This is something your eyecare professional will discuss with you.

## What are your responsibilities for driving?

If you are using orthokeratology lenses, and you have no other medical or disability conditions that impact on your fitness to drive, you will be able to drive on a conditional licence, under which you are responsible for ensuring your vision meets the driving standard.

**This means wearing the orthokeratology lenses as prescribed the night before if you intend to drive. If this isn't possible, you must use other suitable correction (glasses or contact lenses) that bring your vision to the driving standard.**

Check in with the driver licensing authority in your State or Territory regarding the requirements that apply to orthokeratology therapy. You may have additional licensing obligations such as periodic review by your eyecare professional and submission of a current eyesight report.

## How long does orthokeratology therapy take to work?

After the first one- or two-night's wear, most people will notice a significant improvement in their vision. The timing of maximum effect will depend on many factors, including the degree of short-sightedness you have when you begin the therapy. Higher prescriptions can take two or more weeks for maximum correction.

You may need to wear glasses (with a lesser prescription than you originally had) during the process, and this is an important consideration for driving. Your eyecare professional will monitor your vision closely in the initial days and weeks and will advise you about driving.

## Do I need to see my eyecare professional as a condition for licensing?

As mentioned above, requirements for periodic review with your eyecare professional may be linked to your conditional licence, but this will be at the discretion of the driver licensing authority in your State or Territory.

As with all people with an eye condition, you should have your eyes monitored regularly to ensure you meet the vision standards for driving. Orthokeratology patients tend to see their eyecare professional more often than those wearing glasses or regular contact lenses.

## What happens if I decide to forego orthokeratology therapy and resume wearing my prescription lenses or contacts?

Your obligations will depend on the State and Territory requirements where you are licensed.

Please discuss this with your eyecare professional and check with the relevant driver licensing authority. This is important to ensure you drive with the correct applicable licence conditions.

## Where can I go for more information?

For more information about orthokeratology treatment in general, it is best to talk to your eyecare professional.

For information about how the treatment is managed from a driver licensing point of view, please [contact your State or Territory driver licensing authority](#).

[Assessing Fitness to Drive](#) details the Australian medical standards for driver licensing. It is used by health professionals and driver licensing authorities.

For more information visit the Austroads website [austroads.com.au](http://austroads.com.au)

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