

# REFRACTIONS

## What is a refraction?

“Refraction” is the process of determining your eyeglasses prescription. It allows the doctor to determine how well your eyes can see, and your potential “best corrected” vision. A technician or doctor performs the refraction, which is done by placing a series of lenses in front of your eyes.

## Who needs to have a refraction, and what is done with this information?

- A refraction is performed as part of a complete exam on every new clinic patient. It establishes a baseline for best-corrected vision, and is therefore critical for determining the health of the eyes. A refraction is repeated every 1-2 years in adults during the routine eye exam, because it is common for eyeglasses prescription to change over that timeframe. For this reason, an eyeglasses prescription expires after 2 years for adults. In children, due to rapid growth, a refraction is performed every year.
- A refraction may also be performed when a patient has a specific complaint about their vision. Examples of visual complaints include blurry vision, difficulty reading road signs or small print, or headaches while reading. A refraction is a necessary test to determine if these complaints can be alleviated by something as simple as a new pair of glasses. If someone does not have 20/20 vision while wearing their glasses, then a refraction will be performed to see if their glasses need to be updated.
- Some patients who present with visual complaints will not appreciate a noticeable improvement with a refraction. In these cases, a possible medical problem may be discovered. Examples of these include cataract, glaucoma, and macular degeneration.

## How is a refraction performed on a child?

- A refraction is performed on a child or non-verbal adult through a process called “retinoscopy”. Here, the doctor or technician will use an instrument called a “retinoscope” to perform the refraction without any verbal feedback from the patient. Instead, the glasses prescription is determined by shining a light into the eye and observing how that light reacts to different lenses. In young children, retinoscopy is performed after the child has received dilating drops. The drops must be in place for 30 minutes to allow for the best accuracy. Older children who are able to participate in the test may receive a refraction similar to an adult and may not need to wait as long after the dilating drops. The doctor or technician will make that determination at the time of your child’s exam

## Will my insurance pay for a refraction?

- Refraction has always been a non-covered service under the Medicare program. Medicare does not differentiate between a “medical refraction” and one performed solely for the purpose of providing glasses. Your secondary insurance to Medicare may also deny the charge. Our practice will submit this charge to Medicare on your behalf so that it can be forwarded on to your secondary insurance carrier.
- If you know your insurance will not pay for a refraction, you are not having any visual complaints, and you are not planning on changing your glasses, feel free to ask the technician or doctor not to perform refraction during your eye exam to avoid having to pay this charge.
- If you do desire a refraction and know this charge will not be paid by your insurance carrier, we ask that you make payment at the time of your visit.
- If you have any questions about being billed for a refraction, please don’t hesitate to call our business office at (651) 275-3050.