

HEALTHY LIFESTYLES

# Short-arm disease or presbyopia occurs in people 40-years and older

Once the clocks turn back, optometrists' offices get a sudden influx of 40- and 50-year-olds complaining they can't see up close. They are suffering from presbyopia. Presbyopia is not some sort of seasonal eye disorder; rather, it is a change in the eye's lens that occurs naturally with age.

The lens gradually loses flexibility until it can no longer change shape in order to focus up close. Brighter light makes it easier for presbyopic eyes to see clearly, so in summer people may not notice a problem. In autumn, darkness comes early and people spend more time indoors reading, sewing or doing

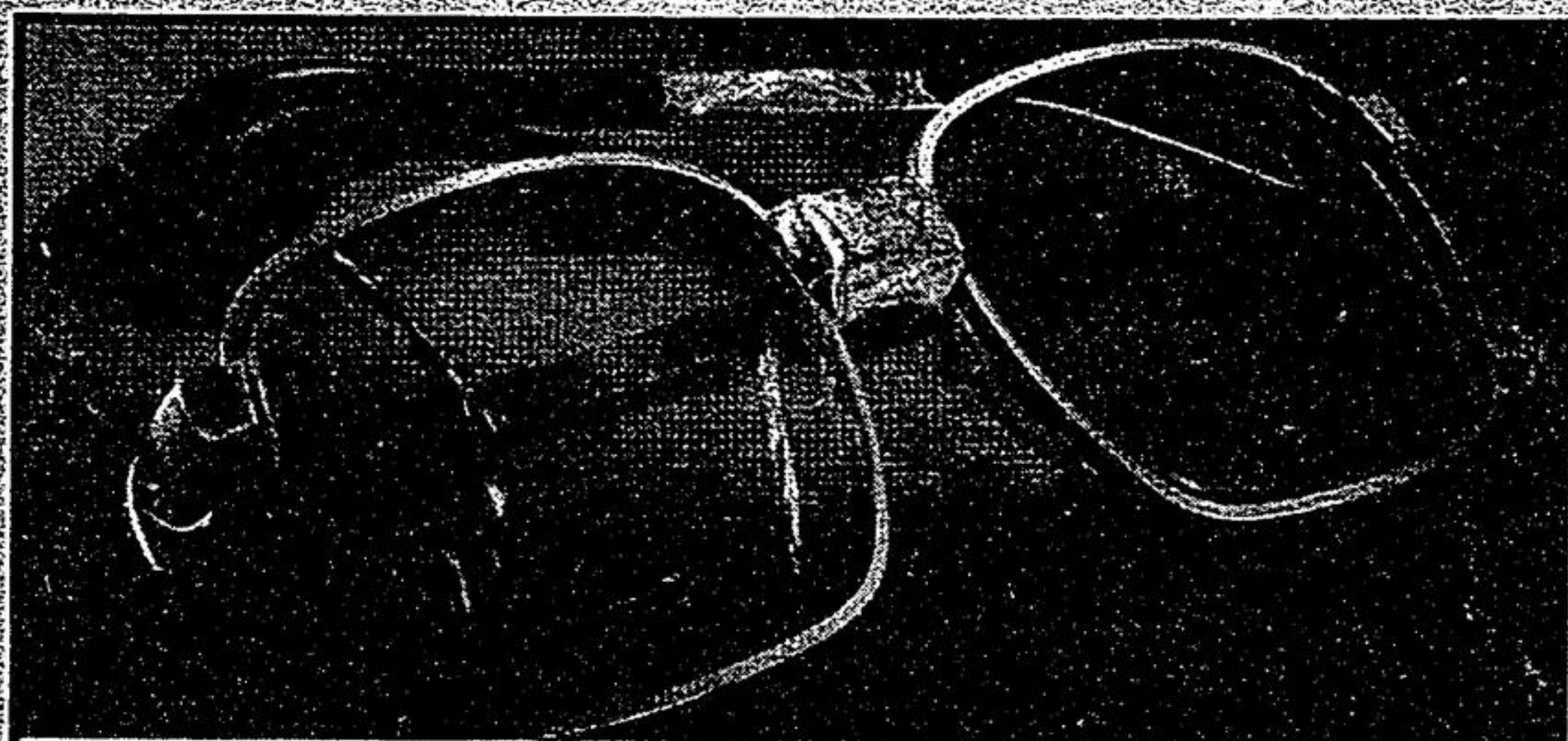
paperwork in the evenings. A common observation by patients is that they start having to hold the phone book farther and farther away to see clearly, which has led to this

condition being nicknamed "short-arm disease." Prescription reading glasses will do when you are going to settle down for an hour of sewing or reading; however, in tasks

where the eye must shift focus continually from one distance to another, the challenge is greater. Anyone using a computer at work, for example, will not be able to see with a regular reading prescription since reading glasses are chosen to make vision clear at reading distance, about 16-18 inches.

Furthermore, bifocals or half glasses put the magnifying lens in the right position for reading where the eyes are cast down, and not in the right position for looking straight ahead at the computer. If you are short-sighted and can't see a face clearly at 10 or more feet, you also need a corrective lens for distance. One workable solution would be a multifocal lens with a gradual change in prescription from the bottom of the lens for reading to the top for distance, with the centre of the lens suitable for middle distance work.

Glasses are available with three or even four different prescriptions in one lens, in configurations designed for very special purposes. Contact lens options include bifocal contacts and mono-vision correction. Mono-vision refers to the correction of one eye for distance and one for near work. The brain learns to suppress the unclear image. *This article was submitted by Drs. Linda Kuhn and Laura Di Nino.*



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## Blurred close vision one sign of presbyopia

Anyone who experiences any of the following symptoms may be developing presbyopia and should have their eyes examined by an optometrist:

- wish for longer arms because you can't get your book far enough away from your face to read it
- confuse small, printed numbers such as six and eight
- headaches
- blurred close vision
- rub eyes often while reading, especially late in the day
- need more light to see clearly
- get drowsy while reading

Once you're over 40, even if your eyes have never bothered you, you should have regular exams with your optometrist to check for presbyopia and for early stages of cataracts, glaucoma and other age-related eye disorders and diseases.

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