

**OPTOMETRISTS
CONTACT LENS PRACTITIONERS
BEHAVIOURAL OPTOMETRY
CHILDREN'S VISION**



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Tinted Reading Lenses and Tinted Reading Overlays

There is a small group of people who experience 'pattern glare' and distortion from the printed page. This causes print to move and blur, and makes the print appear to have patterns or rivers, and so reading can be uncomfortable and difficult.

There is a lot of controversy about the origins of pattern glare (sometimes referred to as Irlen Syndrome or Scotopic Sensitivity Syndrome)*, but it is generally agreed that some people are more sensitive to certain wavelengths of light or that their visual pathways react inappropriately to some wavelengths of light. Typically these people present with long-standing symptoms of frequent headaches or migraines, significant glare sensitivity and movement of the words on the page when reading. There may be an association with epilepsy.

The use of tinted lenses in glasses and coloured overlay sheets can be helpful in certain cases to reduce glare and stabilise the print when reading. Tinted glasses may also be helpful for some migraine sufferers, more likely if glare, certain colours or flickering lights are known to be trigger factors.

However, testing for this type of sensitivity to certain colours of light is entirely subjective and so there is always the possibility that a 'favourite' colour will simply be chosen and as a result the actual beneficial effect of the tint may be minimal or very short-lived (a strong placebo effect). For this reason, we would always recommend a 6 week minimum trial of a tinted overlay before tinting spectacle lenses. This is particularly important when dealing with young children with poor concentration skills.

We would like to emphasise the importance of a full and thorough visual examination before prescribing tinted lenses or overlays because many of the symptoms associated with 'pattern glare' are similar to the symptoms that can occur with common but often subtle eye focusing or eye alignment problems.

At our practice we offer an in-office trial of tinted overlays with one of our optometrists – a half hour session is generally allocated after a full visual efficiency examination. Generally a fee of \$25 applies.

If a strong consistent colour sensitivity is indicated, tinted overlay sheets can be supplied for a 6 week trial before considering whether tinted spectacle lenses would be appropriate.

*A good overview can be found at en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Scotopic_sensitivity_syndrome