

HEALTHY LIVING

Overnight lenses can correct vision

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NEARSIGHTED British Columbians wanting to get red of their eyeglasses or contact lenses have an alternative to laser surgery.

Accelerated orthokeratology corrects vision while patients sleep, allowing for a lens-free day.

The retainer lens works like an orthodontic device for the teeth. The lens realigns the cornea during the night. The new shape is maintained throughout the day when the correctors have been removed.

Dr. Bart McRoberts of the West Vancouver Optometry Clinic has been performing the procedure for a little over a year after taking a course sponsored by a local lens supplier.

"I was a little skeptical going in, but when I saw the results it was quite amazing," said McRoberts. "It's all very carefully measured and calculated."

McRoberts is the only optometrist using the procedure on the North Shore. He's fitted 25 patients, ranging in age from 10 to 57, with the lenses.

"It's a different group from those who have laser surgery done," said McRoberts. "It's

good for patients to have options. There's any number of reasons why patients don't want to wear glasses or contact lenses and they don't mind popping these in before going to bed."

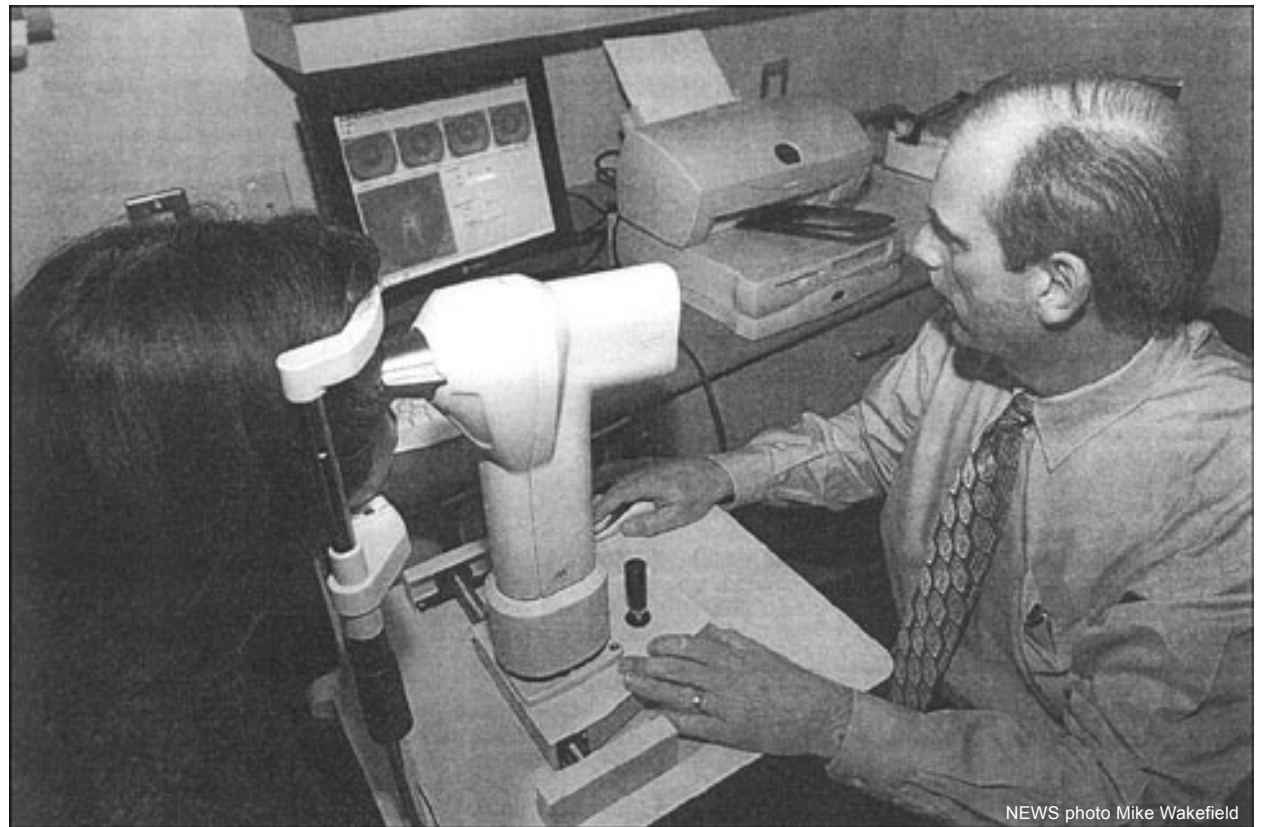
The procedure is reversible, with the cornea typically returning to its original position about two weeks after the patient stops wearing the lenses. Laser surgery is not.

"Surgery is a good option for some people," said McRoberts. "It's still an option but it's not in everyone's individual comfort zone. For those who are not comfortable with the idea of irreversibility, this is the option that they are looking for."

Patients typically adjust to wearing the retainers, which feel like gas-permeable contact lenses, after several weeks.

"Ninety-nine per cent of the time the lenses are in while you're asleep, so comfort is never an issue," said McRoberts, adding that patients can see through the lenses.

As the retainers have more parameters than a conventional contact lens, a new device is designed for every eye. The underside of the orthokeratologic lens has a specific shape that lines up with the front surface of the cornea to create pressure that moves the eye's cells, temporarily reshaping the cornea.



NEWS photo Mike Wakefield

Dr. Bart McRoberts uses a corneal topographer test on a patient at the West Vancouver Optometry Clinic. McRoberts performs accelerated orthokeratology at the clinic, a new non-surgical method to correct vision by reshaping the cornea. The initial cost of the procedure is approximately \$1,800.

Vision usually improves by 60 to 70 per cent after the first wearing.

The lenses may also slow the progress of nearsightedness, said McRoberts. Studies have

shown a decrease in the rate of vision deterioration among children and teens who wear rigid gas-permeable contact lenses, similar to the retainers, compared to those who wear

glasses or soft contact lenses.

Consultation, fitting, and the first two pairs of lenses typically costs \$1,800. The lenses should be replaced every two to three years. The clinic offers

free consultation and a \$40 overnight trial assessment.