

# Shaping the Eyes

## A Young Pitcher Sees 20/20

By Nancy Moore



The author's son, Harley.

Spring is upon us and it is that time once again...baseball season. Only this season, my son, Harley, will be seeing things through rose-colored glasses. Actually, he will be seeing perfectly without any glasses or contact lenses at all—and he has 20/70 vision with astigmatism. How can that be, you might be asking? Well, about a year ago, he began complaining about his inability to see everything on the board at school. He chalked it up to the glare from the dry erase surface (and they don't even use chalk anymore!). It seemed plausible, though, so I ignored him. Then, one summer night at York High School, Harley was pitching for his Legion baseball team. He kept refusing the pitch signals and then, frustrated, he motioned for his catcher to join him at the mound. He explained that he simply could not see the hand signals that the catcher was giving. The very next morning, I made an appointment for him to see an eye doctor. The test results came back and he, indeed, was having difficulty seeing things far away.

Nearsightedness, like Harley's, is a condition that deteriorates pretty rapidly in adolescents. Most parents of nearsighted children will tell you that their children's prescriptions change about every six to nine months. The process becomes rather costly and requires many office visits over the course of just a few years, not to mention the cost for glasses or contact lenses. For active kids like my son, it can also be a cumbersome annoyance to factor in eyewear and eye drops, with playing sports. When Dr. Peter Wilcox of Hayes, Virginia offered a different alternative, we balked at first. (Notice the clever baseball/pitching reference here!) It seemed too cutting-edge to actually work, and more money than I was prepared to spend at the time. Dr. Wilcox explained that he has been clinically investigating the efficacy of improving sight using hard contact lenses on patients during their sleeping hours only. Yes, that's right, he wanted my son to wear hard contact lenses at night so he could remove them in the morning and see perfectly all day...unaided. What? It sounds too good to be true and a total waste of money, right? Well, a few other tidbits of information managed to penetrate my sensibilities. If these things worked, they would allow my child to see better without having to wear glasses while he played sports, and without carrying all the eye paraphernalia that follows a sight-challenged individual. The very image of Harley sifting through the dirt looking for his contact lens made me listen more intently to Dr. Wilcox's sales pitch.

Okay, now here is the biggest dilemma: my son can't even put eye drops in his eyes without a lot of drama and histrionics. How would he ever master putting hard lenses on his eyeballs? Dr. Wilcox assured me that if he could learn to throw a curveball, he could learn to do this. So we swung at this pitch. (Another good baseball comment!)

The concept of hard contact lenses having a lasting impact on a patient's ability to see is nothing new. Our eyeballs apparently, are gelatinous and tend to conform to the shape of the lenses applied to them. When the lenses are removed, it takes some time for the eyeball to return to its original, not-so-good-at-seeing, shape. Dr. Wilcox uses computerized equipment that actually makes a topographical map of a patient's cornea and then it is used to construct a lens that perfectly fits and perfectly corrects eyesight. It still sounds too good to be true. My grandmother always told me if it sounds too easy, it probably is phony. Well, two weeks later, my son's corneal molds were delivered. The learning process to place the lenses in his eyes was not easy, and he became very frustrated. Finally he achieved success and was then instructed to sit in a chair with his eyes closed, in the dark, for fifteen minutes. Now you want him to remove these suckers? A few futile attempts later, the lenses were out and Harley declared that he was never putting those things in his eyes again. Dr. Wilcox's staff administered another eye exam and...Harley had perfect, nearly 20/20 vision. Harley was sold. Dr. Wilcox hit a homerun! (You had to know another baseball reference was probably coming!)

It has now been over six months and Harley has adjusted to his eye regimen and to his new eyesight. He does not require vision aids during the day. And, he can get away with wearing his corneal molds every other day and still see perfectly. His four month follow-up was in December and now he does not need to return to Dr. Wilcox for an eye exam for another six to nine months. His eyesight should remain stable for about two years or more, according to the experts.

If you have an active child who participates in a sport like baseball, swimming, tennis, and who requires vision aid, you might want to contact Dr. Wilcox for a consultation. If your child already wears contact lenses, he or she will be way ahead of the game in terms of learning to insert them in the eyes. The chance to be able to give your child perfect sight during the day and to stabilize his eyesight to

prevent further decline should be reason enough to check it out. It really is not that much more expensive than all those prescription changes, office visits, and eye glass repair/replacement that might be the regular alternative to corneal molding. If you need more convincing, there are many testimonials that adorn the walls of Wilcox Eye Center. What better way to hear the success stories than from the kids themselves. The office staff encourages you to ask other patients about their experience with corneal molds. We certainly did, and the folks we spoke with had nothing but wonderful tales to tell. Most of them were veterans of contact lens wear so these hard lenses were no problem for them to insert and represented a step up in convenience when you consider that they need only be worn while sleeping. We, at home, refer to them as Harley's eyeball retainers!

If you would like to know more, you can visit Dr. Peter Wilcox's Web site at [www.wilcoxeye.com](http://www.wilcoxeye.com). He claims he is in the process of jazzing it up for our entertainment as well as for our information. He is quite a character so it should be interesting to see what he has in store on his site. When you contact his office, please make sure to tell them that you heard about him through PL. Play Ball! pl



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