



FACT SHEET

VARIFOALS

INTRODUCTION: The Professional's Role

The modern marketing 'Spin' seems dedicated to obscuring people's right to choice. As honest professionals with years of experience we have no right to dictate what you can or cannot afford or may or may not value. Our role is to ensure you are given the fullest choice, whether it be clinical care, contact lenses, spectacle frames or spectacle lenses. Offering people only the cheapest product could, and should, be construed as devaluing the patient. It is like saying: **'You can only afford second best so that is all I am going to offer you'**.

Our greatest strength is the freedom for any member of the team to access any policy, technique, contact lens, spectacle frame and indeed spectacle lens for individual needs.

For pricing simplicity some opticians may only supply one or two varifocals. This is restricting your choice, but makes marketing easier. Some make things even less transparent by advertising the 'Add On' cost of a Varifocal rather than the true cost of the lens. Price comparison is impossible when you don't know what the frame cost or the single vision lens cost making it impossible to know the true cost of the varifocal!

As an independent we are not restricted by any marketing policies and will supply any lenses which we feel will be of benefit to our patients. It should never be the professionals role to decide what you can or cannot afford or what you may or may not value. Our role is to ensure you know all your options.

Varifocal lenses are as subject to cost accentuated 'spin' as everything else. We need to defend against the undervaluing of patients by education and open information rather than trying to muddy the water with sometimes less than honest 'deals' which hide the real value of the goods. So how do Varifocals work and why are some much better than others?

General Design All progressive lenses have the distance vision section at eye level, with a corridor, down and in, of increasing power toward the near section (fig 1). Similarly to a bifocal the wearer needs to look down and in to find the near area.

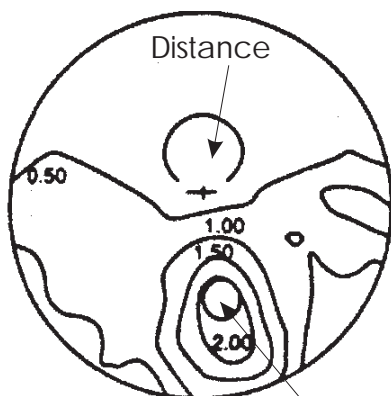


Figure 1
Mean power

We often describe varifocals as 90% lenses - they work very well for most daily tasks, such as signing cheques, looking at a watch or reading while watching TV, but there are tasks for which they are less adequate such as viewing PC screens or reading a notice board. The primary advantage of varifocals over bifocals, apart from the obvious cosmetic advantage afforded by not having a visible line, is that instead of just distance and near portions, all the intermediate zones are catered for - although only in the specific sections of the lens along the power corridor.

The importance of Lens Type and Design: not all varifocals are the same!

Figure 2.

AO PRO progressive addition lens

Isocylinder line diagrams

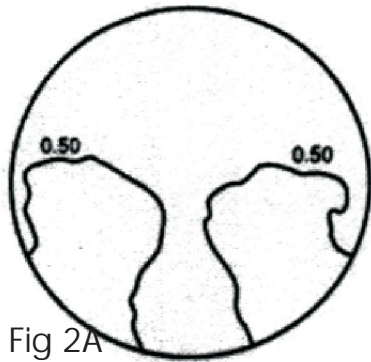


Fig 2A

Plano / +1.00 Add

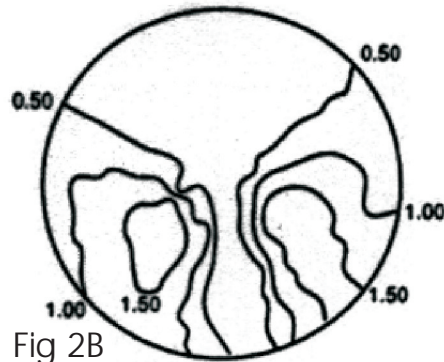


Fig 2B

Plano / +2.00 Add

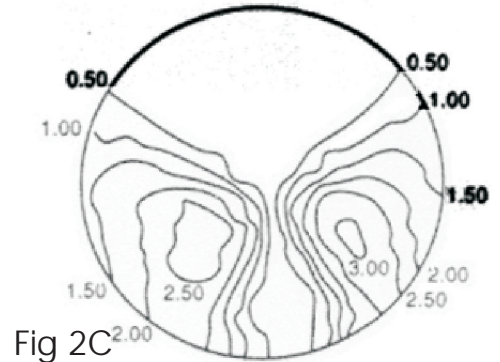


Fig 2C

Plano / +3.00 Add

One problem with progressive lenses is the region of slight distortion on either side of the vision corridor. Different lens types, or indeed different near adds, create different levels of peripheral distortion. Figure 2A shows an AO Pro lens with a low reading Add. The lines (isocylinder lines) represent areas of distortion. In this example the lines are well separated and should not cause difficulties. Figures 2B and 2C are the same varifocal but with increasing reading adds. These result in increasingly dense distortion lines and more likelihood of producing visual difficulties. The highest reading add in fact causes a distortion region that rises above the horizontal midline and so can cause distortion effects even with distance vision.

It has been reported in the optical press that a proportion of patients who fail with varifocals do so because they have simply been offered a cheap design with a lot of edge distortion.

Varifocal Lens Types and Designs and Introducing 'Free Form' Lenses.

Our Varifocals start from £80. That is a true cost, not an 'Add On' or cross subsidised number. If a free frame is chosen this would be the total.

However we rarely recommend this lens. Prices range up to £450 for the Nikon Presio Power 1.74 High Index.

The most popular lenses with our qualified Dispensing Opticians are the new 'FREE FORM' lenses. The end point of the numerous measurements required for these lenses is to get the reading inset to coincide exactly with the persons individual eye movements from distance to near vision. These give significantly less distortion and much better reading capabilities. By no means the most expensive lenses they are certainly extremely good and highly recommended.

Qualified Dispensing Opticians & Professional Advice

From a dispensing point of view it is more meaningful to find out your needs and expectations, suggest the best progressive lens to suit those needs, being mindful of possible negative points, rather than fitting you to a lens we limit you to.

If you would like advice on progressive lenses please make an appointment with one of our qualified Dispensing Opticians. They can explain in more detail the points outlined in this leaflet.