

MYOPIA

How common is myopia?

Myopia, also known as short-sightedness, is a condition of the eye where the light that comes in does not directly focus on the retina but in front of it, causing the image that one sees when looking at a distant object to be blurred, but clear when looking at a close object.

Short-sightedness usually occurs because the eye is too long but may also be because the cornea is too steeply curved (and has too much focusing power).

Symptoms:

Difficulty reading road signs, seeing bus numbers in the distance, reading train times and seeing distant objects clearly, but will be able to see well for close-up tasks such as reading and computer use. Other signs and symptoms of myopia include squinting, eye strain and headaches

Causes:

Although it's not clear exactly why some people become short-sighted, there are some things that can increase your chances of developing the condition.

Your genes: Short-sightedness is known to run in families, so you're more likely to develop it if one or both of your parents are also short-sighted.

Too little time outdoors: Research has found that spending time playing outside as a child may reduce your chances of becoming short-sighted, and existing short-sightedness may progress less quickly. This may be related to light levels outdoors being much brighter than indoors. Both sport and relaxation outdoors appear to be beneficial in reducing the risk of short-sightedness.

Excessive close work: Spending a lot of time focusing your eyes on nearby objects, such as reading, writing and possibly using hand-held devices (phones and tablets) and computers may also increase your risk of developing short-sightedness.

An "everything in moderation" approach is therefore generally recommended. Although children should be encouraged to read, they should also spend some time away from reading and computer games each day doing outdoor activities.

Myopia Control:

There is increasing evidence that Orthokeratology (also known as Overnight Vision Correction) may slow or stop myopic progression. Please see the separate fact sheet about this and take a look at the video on our website. We are pleased to answer any questions you may have and discuss with you whether Myopia Control might be appropriate for you or your child.