Royal Berkshire
NHS Foundation Trust

Children with myopia

This leaflet is for parents and carers of children with myopia and explains what to expect in future and things you can do to help it from getting worse.

What is myopia?

Myopia (near-sightedness or short-sightedness) means that your child can see close objects more clearly than things far away, which will look blurry.

Myopia happens when the eye grows slightly too long or the cornea (outermost layer of the eye) is too curved, causing light to focus in front of the retina (light-sensitive layer of tissue at the back of your eye) rather than directly on it.

The exact causes of myopia are a complex mix of genetics and environment.

How is myopia corrected?

Wearing prescription spectacles or contact lenses to correct myopia will help your child to see clearly in the distance. Children with myopia should generally have an eye test every 6 to 12 months with spectacles usually being updated every 12 months.

All children under 16 (and those under 19 in full-time education) are entitled to free NHS sight tests and optical vouchers at any local high-street optometrist/optician.

While standard glasses/lenses fully correct distance vision, they do not slow down the worsening of myopia (short-sightedness progression) as the child grows.

Progression

Myopia can happen at any age, but if it starts early in childhood, it may progress until early adulthood, leading to higher levels of myopia. Having a higher level of myopia in adulthood can increase the risk of developing eye conditions, such as retinal detachment, glaucoma, myopic macular degeneration and cataracts, making it important to have regular sight tests with your optometrist.

What you can do to help to slow down progression

Your child is likely to become more myopic as they get older. This is often referred to as ‘myopia progression’. Research has been done in recent years to investigate if myopia progression can be slowed or reduced, which has resulted in the following guidance:

- **Encourage outdoor play:** Studies are now showing the importance of spending time outdoors in delaying the onset and progression of myopia. It is recommended that children (even those currently without myopia) spend at least 2 hours (or more) outdoors in daylight each day to slow myopia progression.
- **Monitor/restrict time spent on screens at close working distance:** Children who use smartphones and near digital devices have an increased risk of myopia. The risk increases with more time spent on these devices. The effect is worse when the child is using a near digital device in a dimly lit or dark room. It is recommended that children should avoid reading in dim light, and if near digital devices are used, that the viewing distance should be more than 20cm with adequate daylight or additional room lighting.
- **Myopia control spectacle lenses and contact lenses:** Research trials have shown that specially designed myopia control spectacles or contact lenses can be successful in significantly slowing the rate of myopia progression. **Currently not funded/provided by the NHS**, if you would like to enquire further about this treatment option, please discuss this with your local optometrist specialising in your area. A list of several reputable optometrists in and around the Reading area offering dedicated myopia management programmes can be found online.

Contact us

If you have any questions please ring 0118 322 7169, and select option 1, then option 2 or email rbb-tr.orthopticsreading@nhs.net, Monday to Friday between 8.30am and 4.30pm. Orthoptic Department, Level 2 Eye Block, Royal Berkshire Hospital.

To find out more about our Trust visit www.royalberkshire.nhs.uk

Please ask if you need this information in another language or format.

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