

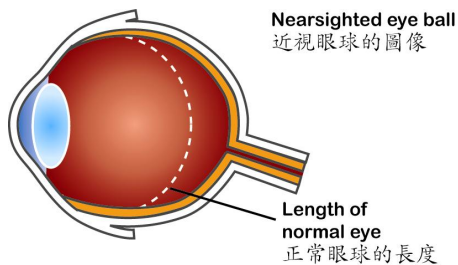
NEARSIGHTEDNESS (MYOPIA)

How close to your face are you holding this newsletter? Is your nose almost touching the paper? Do you have a child who really has their nose in a book or sits very close to the television?

What is Myopia?

The medical name for nearsightedness is myopia. A nearsighted person sees near objects clearly while objects in the distance are blurred. Images of distant objects are focused in front of, instead of on the retina, usually because the eye is too long.

- Distant objects appear blurry
- You need to squint to see clearly
- You have headaches caused by excessive eyestrain
- You sit very close to the television, movie screen or chalkboard
- You hold books very close while reading
- You seem to be unaware of distant objects



Can nearsightedness get worse as you get older?

Yes, but it does not always happen. Some children have a familial or ethnic predisposition to nearsightedness, and their nearsightedness gets more severe very quickly.

Scheduled eye exams for children and adolescents

- Infant eye exams are performed by the pediatrician
- At 3 years and 5 years
- At yearly intervals after age 5

More frequent visits may be needed if your child has symptoms of eye problems.

Scheduled eye exams for adults

The American Academy of Ophthalmology recommends adults with no symptoms or risk factors for eye disease to undergo baseline eye disease screening at age 40 and to receive eye exams every 1 to 2 years for those over age 60. For those with existing vision problems, it is important to continue regular follow up with the eye doctor.

Check with your doctor if you wear corrective lenses.

Screening and diagnosis.

A basic eye exam will diagnose nearsightedness. There are three kinds of eye care specialists.

Ophthalmologist – A medical doctor (M.D.) who specializes in diseases of the eye. This doctor provides complete eye care such as performing eye exams, prescribing corrective lenses, diagnosing and treating common and complex eyes disorders, and performing surgery.

Optometrist – An optometrist has an O.D. degree (Doctor of Optometry). An optometrist can evaluate vision, prescribe corrective lenses and diagnose common eye disorders.

Optician – an optician is an eye specialist who fills prescriptions for eyeglasses, assembling, fitting and selling them. In some states, opticians are allowed to fit and sell contact lenses.

Correction of nearsightedness

1. Corrective lenses

Corrective lenses work by counteracting the curvature of the cornea or increased length of your eye. There are two choices: eyeglasses or contact lenses.

2. Surgery

There are several surgical options for correcting nearsightedness. Understand the different types of procedures, the cost, if medical insurance will cover the surgery, and the possible complications.

Know the facts!

Refractive surgery methods include:

Laser-assisted in-situ keratomileusis-LASIK,
Laser- assisted subepithelial keratomileusis
-LASEK, Photorefractive keratectomy (PRK),
and implantable contact lenses.

Glasses and contact lenses do not cure nearsightedness. Glasses correct the vision without making physical changes. LASIK, LASEK and PRK are surgical procedures that physically change the eye to cure nearsightedness. All three are surgical, procedures, all use lasers (different types), and some require an incision in the cornea. The procedures surgically reshape the cornea. Implantable lenses can be surgically inserted into the eye.

As with all surgical procedures there can be complications. You should discuss possible complications with your ophthalmologist. Some of the complications can make your vision worse. Some cannot be fixed even with glasses. Infection is a possible, although rare, complication.

Prevention of nearsightedness

Parents can feel that it is their fault their child is nearsighted, and feel guilty. Most of the claims of cures and treatment for nearsightedness have not been tested. Currently, there is no way to prevent nearsightedness. There are no current study results that change the way nearsightedness is treated. No special diet or exercises are known to prevent or cure nearsightedness.

Some eye researchers feel that constant near work might make nearsightedness worse. In children, this can be reading a book very close to the face for a long period of time, using the computer and/or playing video games for an extended period, watching television. Sometimes, adults have jobs that require long periods of visual near work. You should take 'breaks' from your near work, by looking up and around frequently, at objects at varying distances.

Discuss your feelings about your child's vision problem with your pediatrician or ophthalmologist.

Serious complications associated with nearsightedness.

The retina can be very thin in people with who are significantly nearsighted. Sometimes the retina can tear or detach. Symptoms of a tear or detachment include sudden flashes of light, floaters or a dark curtain of shadow across part of your eye. **THIS IS A MEDICAL EMERGENCY AND YOU MUST GO TO THE EMERGENCY ROOM OR OPHTHALMOLOGIST IMMEDIATELY.**

The quality of your life depends on many things. The ability to see clearly can be the difference between success and failure in school or at work. It can be the difference between being independent and having to rely on others for basic needs. Not all vision problems can be cured or corrected. Luckily, nearsightedness can be fixed. Take good care of your eyes by having regular vision exams, protecting your eyes from sunlight and hazards, and wearing your glasses.

For more information:

The National Eye Institute: www.nei.nih.gov

Prevent Blindness Northern California:
www.eyeinfo.org