

Floaters

Do you ever notice small specks that move through your field of vision? Called floaters, these are minute clumps of debris in the gel inside your eyeball.

Floaters are usually more annoying than anything else. Move your eye up and down to stir up the eye fluid and the floater will usually move out of the way.

A sudden onset of many floaters, however, can signal an emergency, such as retinal tearing or detachment, which requires immediate treatment.



Bloodshot Eyes

Bloodshot eyes in the morning are usually due to a lack of sleep, alcohol consumption the night before, overuse of contact lenses, or an allergy.

Bloodshot eyes which appear during the day tend to be caused by an irritant, eyestrain, excessively rubbing your eyes, or anything that can dry your eyes – such as high heat, low humidity, or insufficient tear production.

Although bloodshot eyes usually improve by themselves, washing your face and eyelids with cold water can help, as can over-the-counter eye drops. However, overuse of some eye drops can make the problem worse!

Source: UC Berkeley Wellness Letter.

 **Hypochondriac:**
 A person who has an annual check-up every week. 

Mailing and Print Services brochure.

TOO CLOSE for comfort

Are we living in a world that's too closely confined? Vision researchers investigating the increase in myopia believe so.

Myopia, or short-sightedness, is reaching epidemic proportions throughout the world. In Taiwan, for instance, it affects 93 per cent of 18-year-old girls, and in Singapore, 90 per cent of school leavers.

Worldwide, approximately 1.6 billion people are affected, a figure that's expected to grow to a staggering 2.5 billion by the year 2020.

While myopia can be corrected by wearing glasses and contact lenses, having it increases the risk of cataracts, glaucoma, and detached retinas later in life.

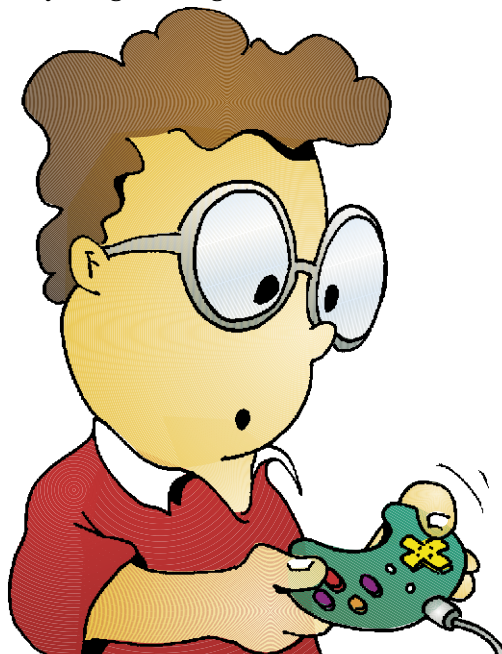
An increasing number of children have myopia, which if undiagnosed, may affect them both educationally and socially.

WHAT CAUSES MYOPIA?

Genetics definitely play a role in its development, but evidence is now emerging that a child's visual environment may also be responsible.

Myopia is basically a problem of growth. The myopic eye is longer than the non-myopic eye, which means the image focuses in front of the retina rather than on it, causing it to appear blurred.

Prolonged periods of looking at things near the eyes, through tasks like reading and playing computer games, is thought to cause a blurred image on the retina, which then responds by producing chemicals that stimulate the eye to grow longer.



This becomes a vicious cycle, made worse if you have a genetic predisposition.

PREVENTION & CURE


Can anything be done to prevent myopia, or stop it progressing?


As a parent, consider the amount of time your child spends watching TV, reading, and playing computer or electronic games. Try to balance this with time spent outside and playing sport, giving kids the opportunity to use their distance vision.

You can also limit the amount of refined starches your child eats, such as biscuits, lollies, and white flour products. Some researchers believe these foods, which increase the body's insulin production, may lead to excess insulin-like growth factors which can trigger elongation of the eyeball in susceptible people.

Ensure you also get your child's vision checked, preferably before he or she begins school, so any problems can be rectified early on.

For children and adults with myopia, researchers are working on a number of options:

- ◆ Contact lenses are being developed for children that will counteract the effects of close-up work by controlling the growth of the shape of the eye. It's hoped this will prevent or slow the progression of myopia.
- ◆ Hard lenses that flatten the cornea during sleep are being trialled. These work in a similar way to laser surgery, but without removing any of the cornea.
- ◆ Surgery to implant a contact lens that corrects the problem in the eye has been approved. Although the surgery is not yet commonly performed, it is expected to become more widespread.
- ◆ Researchers in the US are working on developing bands of artificial muscle that will be wrapped around your eyeballs, changing their shape. 

Main sources: ABC online  www.abc.net.au; and the Sydney Morning Herald newspaper.

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