

---

## Myopia

Myopia, (nearsightedness), is an inability to see objects clearly at distance. This usually translates into difficulty seeing the board at school for children and trouble with street signs while driving for adults. It is a very common ocular condition and its occurrence is increasing every year (at nearly 80% of school children in Asia!) Myopia is linked to a multitude of genetic and environmental factors.

Although regarded as a benign and non-threatening condition, myopia has the potential to lead to various, far more serious ocular health concerns. These include maculopathy, glaucoma, cataracts and retinal detachment. Most researchers agree that while there is no technically “safe” level of myopia, the risk of these vision-threatening conditions increases as the level of myopia increases.

One study demonstrated that myopia could indeed be a higher risk for ocular disease than high blood pressure.

### **Will It Get Worse?**

For a person wearing glasses or soft contact lenses, we expect myopia to increase throughout childhood, typically until a child is around 19 years old or finished with formal schooling.

Near work like reading, computer or tablet use is associated with progression of myopia. Lack of outdoor play time has also been associated with myopia progression.

The myopia level of a child’s parents and older siblings can help us make a prediction for a child’s likelihood of myopia progression, but it is not exact. It is impossible to predict exactly how nearsighted someone will become, as every individual is different.

### **What Can We Do?**

For a long time, there wasn’t much that could be done for myopia, other than prescribe stronger and stronger glasses each year.

Although in the past some people believed that under-correcting (giving less than the full prescription) could help slow progression, more recent studies have shown that this may even increase the rate of myopia. Similarly, eye exercises have not been shown to be effective.

Lately, there has been intensive research in regards to myopia management (slowing the progression of myopia), which has shown that myopia progression can be stopped or slowed.

**Special contact lenses or prescription eye drops can be effective at truly treating nearsightedness, particularly in children.**