



MYOPIA MATTERS

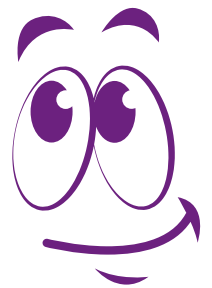
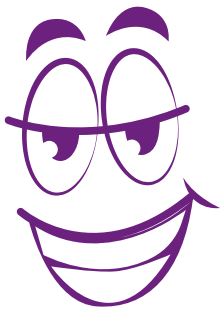
Why we need teachers' help in the classroom

Myopia, also known as 'short-sightedness', is a common eye condition that causes blurred distance vision, usually starting during childhood and typically progressing until the child stops growing.

Myopia is rapidly becoming a significant public health concern in Australia.

It is estimated that by the year 2050, nearly 5 billion people will be affected by myopia, 50% of the projected global population¹. For Australia and New Zealand, the forecasts are slightly higher at 55% and we already have an estimated 36% of the population affected².

Optometrists are able to diagnose myopia and may be able to slow the progression of myopia in children. It's therefore important for a child to see an optometrist early in their developmental years, even if there are no known problems, as high myopia is associated with lifelong increased risks of eye diseases and children may be unaware their vision is not as it should be.



Myopia signs to look out for

Teachers play a very important role in discussing with parents if they suspect a student has vision difficulties, before they start to have a significant impact on their learning.

THE EARLY WARNING SIGNS OF MYOPIA

Remember the 3 S's

1

Sitting

closer to the front of class

2

Squinting

to see further away

3

Schoolwork

performance is declining

or you notice unexplained changes in behaviour at school

*There are two main factors which can mean a child is more at risk of developing myopia: **lifestyle and family history.***

You can't influence genetics but parents can feel empowered when it comes to lifestyle factors.





Creating a healthy eye environment at school

The peak professional bodies for Optometry in Australia and New Zealand recommend creating a healthy eye environment at school to help protect the vision of students. This should include:

- good and even lighting in the classroom
- limited computer sessions which include short breaks from looking at the computer (for at least five to 10 minutes every hour)
- correctly positioned computer monitors (at, or slightly below, eye level with minimal reflections)
- appropriately sized fonts and appropriate use of colours on computer monitors and whiteboards and provision for varied outdoor play during school hours.



Myopia Busting Tips when discussing with parents

- More green time less screen time – to get kids outdoors
- Build in regular breaks from devices at home – every 20 minutes remind your child to have a break for at least twenty seconds and look out a window to something at least six metres away³
- Regular eye examinations with the local optometrist

Why and when should children get their eyes examined?

Optometrists can identify children more likely to become myopic and advise parents about interventions including increased outdoor time.

It is recommended that children have a full eye examination with an optometrist before starting school and then regular visits as they progress through primary and secondary school.

Visit [childmyopia.com](https://www.childmyopia.com) for more

¹ The Impact of Myopia and High Myopia: Report of the Joint World Health Organization – Brien Holden Vision Institute Global Scientific Meeting on Myopia. University of New South Wales, Sydney, Australia. 16–18 March 2015

² Holden B; Fricke T; Wilson D et al. Global Prevalence of Myopia and High Myopia and Temporal Trends from 2000 to 2050. *Ophthalmology*. 2016;123:1036–42

³ <https://www.mykidsvision.org/en-us>