



More and more young children are getting myopia and need to wear glasses

JOIN THE 20-20-2 CHALLENGE!

More children than ever before need glasses or contact lenses because they have trouble seeing things far away. This is known as myopia. Eye care professionals have noticed that the number of children with myopia has increased over the years. They want to stop this trend. Even better: reduce the number of children with myopia. ①

5 EVERY EYE IS UNIQUE

Did you know that every eye is unique? The colour, size, and shape make your eyes special. They are so unique that at some airports, your eyes are scanned instead of your passport. Your eyes grow from birth until about the age of 25. They grow along with your body. You cannot see your eyes growing, but special devices can measure this growth. Research shows that eyes grow the fastest until the age of 12. ②

10 SOME NUMBERS

Sometimes, eyes do not grow perfectly, and you develop myopia. Myopia is a vision problem. If you have myopia, you can see things close by clearly, but things far away are blurry. Glasses with a minus strength help you see things in the distance better. Eye care professionals are very busy with children developing myopia. Not only in the Netherlands but worldwide, the number of people with myopia is increasing rapidly. Among people who are now 60 years or older, 25 out of 100 have myopia. For people in their forties, it is 33%. Among 25-year-olds, 56 out of 100 already have myopia. And for 13-year-olds, it is 25%. This percentage is much higher than 10 years ago. Eye doctor Caroline Klaver wants to reverse the increase in children with myopia because blurry vision is annoying. Many people do not know that myopia can have serious long-term effects. Caroline Klaver says, "Children who develop myopia have a much higher risk of serious eye conditions as adults, such as glaucoma and retinal problems. ③④

EYES ADAPT

During childhood, your eyes grow with your body. They also adapt based on how you use them. If your eyes mostly see things up close (between 1 and 30 cm) because you read a lot or look at your smartphone for a long time, the shape of your eyes adapts. The shape of your eyeball, which is naturally as round as a football, can become longer. This change in shape is not visible to you, making it hard to notice. The shape of your eyeball becomes more oval, like a rugby ball. This puts more strain on your eyes, increasing the risk of retinal tears. ⑤



CAUSES OF MYOPIA

Myopia can sometimes be hereditary, meaning children have myopia because one of their parents or grandparents has it. But, it can also be caused by looking at things up close too often and for too long. Research shows that using smartphones and tablets is not good for young eyes. "Drawing or colouring can also cause myopia," says Caroline Klaver. "But when drawing or colouring, you probably look up or around more often. Looking at screens is a form of non-stop staring at a short distance from your eyes, and that's a problem." Therefore, the WHO (World Health Organization) recommends:

- No screen time for children aged between 0 and 1 year.
- For 2-year-olds, a maximum of 1 hour of screen time per day, preferably less.
- For children aged 3 and 4 years, a maximum of 1 hour of screen time per day.

Caroline also recommends limiting screen time for children in Years 6 and 7 to a maximum of 2 hours per day. Screen time refers to looking at a screen you hold in your hand, such as a tablet or phone. Watching TV is not included because TVs are usually more than 3 meters away. ⑥⑦⑧

LESS SCREEN TIME, MORE OUTDOOR TIME

But screens and looking at things up close are not the only culprits. Research shows that children spend little time playing outside, and that is also a problem. In 2024, children played outside for an average of only 7 hours per week. That is two and a half hours less than in 2022. It is only 1 hour per day, while for eye growth, it is better to be outside for at least 2 hours per day. Sunlight releases dopamine in the retina of your eye. Dopamine helps slow down any mis-shaping of your eyeball. Sunlight can prevent your eyeball from becoming rugby ball-shaped. ⑨

JOIN THE 20-20-2 CHALLENGE!

A simple reminder is the 20-20-2 rule. It means: After every 20 minutes of looking up close, you should look into the distance for at least 20 seconds. On top of that, you should spend at least 2 hours outside every day. "Children up to 12 years old who spend 2 hours outside daily hardly ever develop myopia," says Caroline Klaver. So join the 20-20-2 challenge!

Are things far away already blurry for you? Do not put it off. Talk to your parents or family today!. ⑩

Sources: oogfonds.nl, demorgen.be, jantjebeton.nl, NOG, NUVO, NVVO, AJN-jeugdartsen, OVN, world health organization/www.iris.who.int