

Myopia

The medical term is...

Myopia

But it's often called...

Short-sight

Intro

Myopia is a common problem with the eye's focusing that can affect your vision at all distances, but especially for seeing far-away things. It can easily be corrected with glasses or contact lenses.

How you see the world

If you have myopia, things can look blurred, especially if they are far away. You can see things very close to you better. You might also get headaches and tired eyes.

How the world sees you

People with myopia look normal, but they might wear glasses or contact lenses.

What does the word mean?

Myopia comes from two Greek words: myein, meaning 'closed', and 'ops', meaning eye – so together they mean 'closed eye'.

Why did I get it?

A number of factors probably combine to cause myopia. There is a tendency for myopia to run in families. Myopia usually appears around puberty, but can appear at any age from early childhood. In most cases, myopia will stop getting worse when your body is fully grown.

Myopia is caused by a focusing problem. Think about it like this - when you watch a movie at the cinema, the film projector has to be focused to get a nice sharp picture on the screen. Light passes through your eye's natural lens like it passes through the projector's lens. Light then focuses on the retina at the back of your eye the way it focuses on the cinema screen.

Imagine if the distance between the projector and the screen was too long: the picture on the screen would be blurred. In myopia, the length of your eyeball is too long for the strength of your eye's lens. Light is focused too far forward, in front of the retina, and so things look blurred.

How can the doctor tell?

Myopia is usually diagnosed with a simple glasses test using a special torch (retinoscope) and lenses to measure how your eye focuses.

Getting it sorted

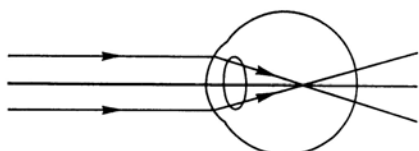
Myopia can usually be corrected with glasses or contact lenses. These are concave (curved inwards) lenses, which move the focus of the light backwards onto the retina, allowing you to see clearly.

Is it common?

Approximately 30% of people in Britain are short-sighted and approximately 5% of those have severe myopia. People of Asian origin are much more likely to be myopic.

Laser surgery to correct myopia is also available but is usually only used on adults, once the eye has stopped growing. It works by changing the shape of your cornea so that light is focused correctly.

Picture This



Light rays are focussed too far in front of the retina in myopia

Factoids

- Children with severe myopia will not develop good vision without spectacles
- Myopia makes it difficult to see far away objects
- Myopia can't be prevented

When the going gets tough

If you have severe myopia you are at more risk of developing a retinal detachment. This is when fluid separates the two layers of the retina at the back of your eye. If you ever suddenly experience a loss of vision, see a shadow in your vision, lots of black floaters or spots or flashes of light you must see an optician or eye doctor as soon as possible.

Stopping it before it starts

There is no treatment that prevents myopia, but wearing glasses does not make myopia worse. It is important that you get regular eye tests as myopia can get worse as you grow.

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Monday to Friday 09.00 to 16.30 for further information and advice.

Credits

Date Published: December 2009 ***Date for review:*** Dec 2010

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