

Global Myopia Awareness Coalition



Enjoy a 'Screen Staycation'

Did you know, just 76 extra minutes outside a day can reduce the risk of myopia (short-sightedness) by 50%ⁱ? For one weekend, we want to challenge you and your family to go screen-free and head outside, and this guide is here to help!

While summer is the time for relaxation, it can also be when children spend most of their days off watching TV or playing on devices, contributing to the progression of myopia. To help, we have teamed up with Optometrist, Dr Keyur Patel, and created the **Screen Staycation Guide**. Packed with outdoor screen-free activity swaps and tips to help children keep their eyes healthy, our guide also includes information on the top signs you should watch out for to see if your child may have myopia.

Join us on your very own Screen Staycation!

So, what is myopia?

You may know it as **"short-sightedness"** —when you can see close objects clearly, but far away objects appear blurred, such as the TV screen or the board in schoolⁱⁱ. But did you know that it is a disease that gets worse over time and is growing at a rapid rate in children, especially with more time spent on screensⁱⁱⁱ?

Myopia affects one in six children in the UK by the age of 15^{iv} and it has been estimated that by 2050, almost 50% of the world's population will be myopic^v. If not treated early, myopia could continue to progress and increase the risk of your child developing sight-threatening eye diseases which can impact their success^{vi}.

Screen Staycation activity ideas

We have teamed up with Optometrist, Dr Keyur Patel to share their Screen Staycation activity swaps to help give your child's eyes a break.

1. Watching YouTube – swap to:

- Run a mini archeological excavation in your mini sandpit or on your activity table
- Exercise your vision both near and far as you throw a frisbee around or fly a kite
- Go paintballing with your friends and family (ensure you wear eye protection)

2. Watching a movie – swap to:

- Dress up and put on an outdoor show for family and friends
- Take part in a 'Natural Scavenger Hunt' - collect things from nature and make a collage
- Learn a new skill or take up a new hobby like skateboarding

3. Playing computer games – swap to:

- Take part in 'Bug Bingo' – see how many you can spot!
- Host a sports tournament and see who will bring home this year's trophy
- Get your friends together and visit an outdoor adventure centre, like Go Ape!



Top 5 tips from the Global Myopia Awareness Coalition and Optometrist, Dr Keyur Patel, on how to keep your child's eyes healthy



1. **Spend more time outdoors** – it has been shown to have a protective effect for the onset of myopia and reduction in myopic progression^{vii}.
2. **Get a good night's sleep** – a study found that children with less than seven hours of sleep had a higher risk of myopia compared to children who slept nine or more hours a night^{viii}.
3. **Take a break when using smart devices** – as exposure may be associated with an increased risk of myopia^{ix}.
4. **Encourage your child to hold books or devices at a distance** – the same distance as from their knuckle to their elbow is a good guide – as holding them too close can increase myopia^x.
5. **Eating a balanced diet rich in vitamins and nutrients** can have a positive impact on your child's eye health.

What signs should I look out for to see if my child has myopia?

Optometrist, Dr Keyur Patel, shares the top 10 signs you should watch out for – to see if your child has myopia^{ii xi}.

1. Difficulty reading words from a distance, such as reading the board at school
2. Sitting too close to the TV or computer, or even holding a mobile phone or tablet too close to their face
3. Getting headaches could be a sign of strained eyes and poor vision
4. Rubbing their eyes, a lot
5. Unaware of things in the distance
6. Complaining their eyes feel tired or strained
7. Your child's teacher saying your child is having difficulty in the classroom or with simple eye hand coordination tasks (e.g. catching a ball)
8. Covering up one of their eyes to try and focus their vision
9. Squinting when looking at objects in the distance
10. Excessive blinking

If not treated early, myopia will continue to progress and could even lead to serious eye diseases. But there's good news!

Myopia can be managed and now is the time to ask an optometrist about new treatment options—beyond regular contacts and glasses—that can help slow the progression of myopia and set your children up for success today and in the future.

Do not delay and book an appointment for your child to see an optometrist before they go back to school!

References

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