Myopia affects one in six children in the UK by the age of 15 and it has been estimated that by 2050, almost 50% of the world’s population will be myopic. 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.

Did you know, just 76 extra minutes outside a day can reduce the risk of myopia (short-sightedness) by 50%? This summer, we want to encourage you and your family to create your very own Sight Sanctuary, recreating the nostalgia of playing outside this summer.

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, Hamza Mussa, and created the Sight Sanctuary Parenting Guide. Packed with information on how to create your very own Sight Sanctuary, as well as 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.

So, what is myopia?
You may know it as “shortsightedness” — when you can see close objects clearly, but far away objects appear blurred, such as the TV screen or the board in school. 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 screens?

Myopia affects one in six children in the UK by the age of 15 and it has been estimated that by 2050, almost 50% of the world’s population will be myopic. 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.

Build your own Sight Sanctuary
When we factor in TV time, phones, tablets, video games, computer games, we see most children today aren’t engaged with the great outdoors at all, they’re inside with their eyes glued to a screen. We know this can contribute to the progression of myopia – the risk of myopia is 3.5 times greater when kids spend more than 7 hours on screens per week.

We are challenging you and your kids to create their very own Sight Sanctuary. This will be a haven to nurture their eye health, physical health and mental health — a place to encourage them to get outside and enjoy the outdoors. This could be a treehouse, dedicated space for sports or playing in the local park. Why not encourage your kids to let their imagination run wild and build a secret hideaway in the forest. You can even get your child thinking about the colours, shapes, and unique features that will make their Sight Sanctuary truly special.

We have teamed up with Optometrist, Hamza Mussa, to share some ideas on how you can give your child’s eyes a break this summer

1. Get outside
   - Build the treehouse that you and your children always wanted!
   - Build a den in the woods or your garden
   - Play in the local park
   - Create a dedicated outdoor space for sports and games
   - Make an obstacle course outside
   - Make a sun catcher, garden wind chimes or fairy door for your Sight Sanctuary

2. Get creative indoors
   - Make a pillow fort, using blankets, pillows, dressing gowns...
   - Encourage your children to create an at home garden, and take care of their own crops or flowers – you could place them on a balcony / windowsill
   - Create an at home bird watching space, with a homemade bird feeder on a window or balcony – can your children draw the birds they see?
Top 5 tips from the Global Myopia Awareness Coalition and Optometrist, Hamza Mussa, 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.

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.

3. **Take a break when using smart devices and during near work** — exposure may be associated with an increased risk of myopia.

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.

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, Hamza Mussa, shares the top 10 signs you should watch out for to see if your child has myopia.

1. Difficulty reading words from a distance, such as reading the board at school or signs when you are out and about

2. Sitting too close to the TV or computer, or even holding a mobile phone or tablet too close to their face

3. Complaining their eyes feel tired or strained

4. Rubbing their eyes, a lot

5. Unaware of things in the distance

6. Getting headaches could be a sign of strained eyes and poor vision

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

Myopia progresses fastest in younger children, and those with higher levels of myopia have an increased risk of serious eye diseases later in life. But there is 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. The younger the child is when treatment starts, the more benefit they will get.

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

**References**

1. Myopia Awareness. [https://www.myopiaawareness.org/uk](https://www.myopiaawareness.org/uk) Last accessed: July 6 2023

2. NHS Myopia. [https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/short-sightedness](https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/short-sightedness) Last accessed: July 6 2023


12. All About Vision. Signs and symptoms that your child may have myopia. [https://www.allaboutvision.com/conditions/refractive-error/signs-child-has-myopia](https://www.allaboutvision.com/conditions/refractive-error/signs-child-has-myopia), Last accessed: July 6 2023


17. All About Vision. Signs and symptoms that your child may have myopia. [https://www.allaboutvision.com/conditions/refractive-error/signs-child-has-myopia](https://www.allaboutvision.com/conditions/refractive-error/signs-child-has-myopia), Last accessed: July 6 2023