

Let Your Kids' Eyes Shine

A recent study by the Faculty of Medicine at the Chinese University of Hong Kong has found that there has been a sharp rise in myopia, also known as nearsightedness, among school-aged children in Hong Kong during the COVID-19 period because they have spent less time outdoor and more time on screens indoor. You may scan the QR code on the right to read more details of the study.



As parents/guardians, we should pay close attention to our children's eye health. If you notice them squinting or getting close to the screen or a book to read, this could be an early indication of myopia. It is advisable that you call the class teacher to see if they notice similar incidents in the school. If

the school tells you that your child copies from the neighbour frequently, this might trigger the alarm bells, too. If any of these happen, take your child to a professional to have an eye test and seek their advice on the follow-up needed. To reduce the chance of your child having myopia, it is recommended that they spend more time outdoor in natural sunlight.

Even if your child is not suffering from myopia, increased screen-time can still lead to eye strain. The main symptoms are itchy, tired or burning eyes but other symptoms may include:

- dry eyes;
- watery eyes;
- blurred vision;
- double vision;
- headaches;
- difficulty keeping eyes open;
- trouble concentrating; and
- photophobia (light sensitivity).

Consult an eye specialist if your child experiences any of the symptoms above persistently.

THE 20-20-20 RULE

Give your eyes a break and avoid eye strain



Take a break for
20 seconds...



... and look at something
20 feet away...



... every 20 minutes.

Use the 20-20-20 rule to lessen the effects of digital eye strain.

Eye specialists recommend the 20-20-20 Rule to prevent eye strain. The Rule suggests that every 20 minutes you take a break and look at an object at least 20 feet (6.1 metres) away for at least 20 seconds. The reason being that it takes your eye muscles 20 seconds to fully relax.

Another cause of eye discomfort is dry eyes, especially if the classroom or home is heavily air-conditioned. To avoid dry eyes, reduce screen-time if possible and also:

- drink more water to stay hydrated throughout the day;
- ensure adequate sleep/rest;
- blink often (when looking at screens, our blinking rate tends to decrease by around 1/3);
- use artificial tears/lubricating eye drops;
- dim screens and reduce glare from reflections;
- sit further away from your screen, roughly an arm's length is suggested; and
- avoid wearing contact lens every day. Wear glasses for a day from time to time to give the eyes a break.

In conclusion, it is important to keep an eye on your child's eye health. Remember to:

- observe them for signs of myopia and reduce the time spent on screens;
- remind them to give their eyes a break and use the 20-20-20 Rule; and
- encourage them to do outdoor activities and stay in natural sunlight.