

Myopia (Near-Sightedness)

A plain-English guide for you and your family

WHAT IS HAPPENING

Myopia, or near-sightedness, means you can see nearby objects clearly but things far away look blurry. This happens because your eye is shaped a bit too long from front to back, or the clear lens at the front bends light rays too strongly. Either way, when light enters your eye, it focuses into a sharp image too early—in front of the retina (the light-sensing screen at the back of your eye)—instead of right on it. By the time the light reaches the retina, it has spread out again, so distant objects look fuzzy. Reading a book or looking at your phone works fine because those close-up light rays naturally spread wider and end up focusing in the right spot. Glasses or contact lenses with a minus prescription gently spread the incoming light so it lands exactly on the retina, making distance vision clear again. Myopia often starts in childhood and may get stronger during the growing years, then usually levels off in the late teens or early twenties.

What you might feel

- Blurry vision when looking at faraway objects (like a whiteboard or street sign)
- Squinting to see distant things more clearly
- Sitting closer to the TV or moving closer to see signs or faces
- Headaches, especially after trying to see faraway things for a long time (like in class or while driving)
- Eye strain or tired, achy eyes by the end of the day
- Holding books or phones very close to the face to read comfortably
- Trouble seeing the board at school or recognizing people across the room
- Sudden, severe vision loss or a curtain/shadow blocking part of the visual field
- New floaters (tiny specks or cobwebs drifting in vision) or flashes of light, especially in someone with moderate to high myopia

Call the doctor right away if...

- Sudden loss of vision or a dark curtain or shadow spreading across the visual field (may be retinal detachment — needs emergency eye exam within hours)
- Sudden shower of new floaters, flashes of light, or both together, especially in someone with moderate or high myopia (can signal retinal tear or detachment)
- Severe eye pain with blurry vision, nausea, and seeing halos around lights (may be acute angle-closure glaucoma, which is more common in certain eye shapes — needs emergency care)

What the care team will do

- Screen immediately for retinal detachment and acute glaucoma symptoms
- Teach the patient how corrective lenses work and why wearing them matters
- Encourage outdoor time and screen breaks, especially for children and teens
- Schedule regular comprehensive eye exams (yearly for children with myopia, every 1-2 years for adults)
- Educate about myopia control options for children with progressive myopia

Medicines you may be given — and why

Atropine 0.01% eye drops

Atropine blocks certain receptors in the eye muscle that normally make the eye's lens change shape for close-up vision. By blocking these receptors, it slows down the eye from growing too long (which is what causes near-sightedness to worsen in children).

Where this information comes from

- American Academy of Ophthalmology (AAO) Preferred Practice Pattern for Refractive Errors
- American Optometric Association (AOA) Evidence-Based Clinical Practice Guideline on Myopia
- Cochrane Eyes and Vision systematic reviews on myopia progression
- World Health Organization (WHO) World Report on Vision 2019

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