

Parents! Tell your children: turn off the computers, smart phones, tablets and go outside

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Myopia is one of the most important problems in children's eye diseases. It is a serious public health concern because it is growing at an alarming rate during the last decades and this condition sometimes leads to blindness.

The Health Organization (WHO) estimated that by 2050 the half of world will have Myopia.

In certain Asian countries, up to 90% of young adults are now myopic, with a prevalence of high myopia of the order of 20%, in some countries of the world doubled prevalence of myopia.

The prevalence of myopia is not well-established in Europe, but is probably in the range of 20 to 30%. Europe needs to collect more comprehensive, methodologically sound and up-to-date data to ascertain a more accurate picture of the prevalence of myopia and high myopia among European populations, "said the Professor Ian Morgan PhD to delegates attending the 17th EURORETINA Congress in Barcelona. That is the best way to see if and when an epidemic of myopia emerges.

The intensive development of the educational system is a leading factor in the explosion of myopia in recent years. There is an epidemic of myopia. Young people should spend more time outdoors, as this has been shown to be a protective factor against myopia development. We also need to encourage children to spend less time indoors, reduce the use of computers and smart phones.

There are some causes of myopia. The most important are genes, environment and growing eyeball, which is caused too much near work. Definitely the eyeball is growing when children spend more time on near work, the eyeballs are very adaptive while they are developing and eye growth is an answer as a compensatory mechanism if we impose a lot of near work.

Nowadays, a lot of studies have found that spending more time outdoors and exposure to natural daylight interfere with the development and progress of myopia.

The study in JAMA Ophthalmology found that sunlight exposure

on the children and young people had about 30% lower risk of development and progress of myopia than without UVB exposure.

Spending time outdoors is good advice for trying to reduce the chance of getting myopia, "said the senior author Astrid E. Fletcher of the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine. According to some researchers' opinion by the daylight dopamine is released, which slows down the growth of the eye preventing the risk of myopia. But it is only theory, and it is not proved.

Researchers believe that the main culprit is: too much near work, and less time **outdoors**.

The centers for disease control and prevention (CDC) reports that Children and teenager spend an average 8-9 hours a day in front of a screen, parents should protect their child from the modern trap in today's world.

Children and teenagers need social interaction, and real-world experiences for healthy development.

Emerging information raises alarm and begs somebody for an action. We can, we - eye care professionals have an opportunity to give the information to children and parents about negative influence of gadgets, and we can explain to parents that too much screen time can damage not only eyesight but mental health, social skills, behavior, cognition. And moreover, develops real addiction, like drugs- cocaine addiction.

So, Parents! Tell your children: turn off your electronic devices and go outside to enjoy the beautiful weather. Perhaps the new mantra should be: "Go outside, you're blinding yourself in here.

Finally, the World Society of Pediatric Ophthalmology and Strabismus (WSPOS) statement does suggest that intensity of near work, i.e. sustained reading at closer distance with fewer breaks, maybe more important than total hours spent. The 20-20-20 rule (focusing 20 feet seconds every 20 minutes of near work) may therefore be important not just for decreasing dry eyes but also myopia.