

Are your eyes failing you?

Here's some good news! Hello and welcome back from school vacation. Hopefully you got to kick back a bit and are feeling refreshed and ready to tackle this next phase of life! Nearsightedness (myopia) is incredibly common, affecting an estimated 40% of Americans and up to 90% of young adults in Asian countries. It's been theorized that this is due to excessive reading at close distance but research actually refutes this theory, noting a clear lack of association between the two. Mounting research now shows the risk of nearsightedness is closely linked to time spent outdoors, both for kids and adults. To protect your vision, you need regular exposure to bright sunlight! According to research published in 2009, rates of nearsightedness in the US has risen by 66% since the early 70's!! It's estimated that if the trend continues, nearly half of the world's population will be nearsighted by the year 2050! Obviously, the increasing use of computers, cellphones and tablets and the blue light (LED) that they emit is NOT good for our eyes and have further devastating effects on our chemistry by disrupting normal function of the pituitary gland in our brain. However, multiple studies show that the greatest risk for myopia is found in the population that spends the most time indoors. The greater the number of hours spent outdoors, the lower the rate of near sightedness. Several large studies in Europe showed that those who had gotten the most sun exposure, particularly between the ages of 14 and 19, were about 25% less likely to develop myopia by middle age. (this showed to be true regardless of gender, country of origin, education and career) Strong correlations were found between current eyesight and the volunteers' lifetime exposure to sunlight, above all UVB radiation. According to optometrist Donald Mutti Ph.D. children who are genetically predisposed to myopia (there can be a genetic tendency in some people) are 300%(!) less likely to need glasses if they spend at least 14 hours a week outdoors. That is significant to say the least! In Singapore, public health campaigns have even been introduced encouraging children to get outdoors to prevent nearsightedness. The slogan; "Keep myopia away, go outdoors and play!" Now bright light is important for OVERALL HEALTH! When full spectrum light (ie. sunlight) enters your eyes, it not only goes to your visual centers enabling you to see, it also goes to your brain's hypothalamus where it impacts your entire body. Your hypothalamus controls functions such as body temperature, hunger and thirst, water balance and blood pressure. It also controls your body's master gland, the pituitary, which secretes many essential hormones, including those that influence your mood. Consequently, inadequate sun exposure or chronic exposure to unopposed blue light from artificial lights has far reaching impact on your body's ability to function. If you ever wondered why most people are happier and healthier when they are surrounded by sunlight (like in the summer or on vacation down south) there you have your answer! So for a better functioning body AND better vision, spend time outside on a daily basis. Don't wear sunglasses all the time either, except in the middle of the day. Today's specs are very efficient at blocking out this vital sun light so make it a point to be outside without them as much as is possible. Knowledge is power so stay educated. If you don't take care of your body-where are you going to live?! Make it a remarkable day!

Cheers, The wellness Committee at SHS