How do I know if my child has myopia?

Q Recently, I found out my 6-year-old daughter always squints while watching television programs and unable to read some words on signboards. Is it a sign that she has myopia? What should I do?

A Unfortunately, the answer is no. Squinting is usually due to astigmatism, and the most likely cause in this scenario is myopia. However, environmental factors are also extremely important. Children living in urbanised societies appear to be at greater risk of myopia, and more so in high-income areas.

Parents may be worried about their children developing myopia, yet there is no definitive cure. The only option is to monitor the condition through regular eye tests and maintain proper vision through visual exercises.

I recommend that parents ensure that their children do not get too close to the television screen for prolonged periods. Several authorities agree that at least 20 minutes of rest is recommended, with at least one hour of outdoor activities daily.

In addition, regular activities such as reading, writing, drawing, colouring and taking frequent breaks from using vision devices will help in reducing the symptoms.

What are the treatment options?

Myopia can be treated with spectacles, contact lenses and laser surgery. However, if myopia progression is rapid despite conservative measures, one may consider surgical interventions. There are several surgical procedures available, each with its own advantages and disadvantages.

Some interventions for rapid myopia progression include atropine eye drops, orthokeratology and myopia control glasses. Typically, it costs $1,800. There are also full-day packages.

ASK THE EXPERTS

How can I prevent my kid from getting myopia?

Q My 12-year-old is often playing computer games and watching television too long. I do not want him to get myopia. How can I prevent him from getting myopia?

A The single most important factor to prevent children from getting myopia is lack of sufficient time spent outdoors. There is strong evidence that children with sufficient exposure to outdoor activities have significantly lower rates of myopia.

Several studies have shown that outdoor activities during recess resulted in a significantly lower rate of new onset myopia after one year. A study by Coopman et al also found that children attending schools with a good amount of recess time were less likely to develop myopia.

Faster outdoor activities are also associated with increased rates of physical activity, which can help control myopia progression. However, it is crucial to remember that myopia is not the focus of treatment for myopia control. Numerous studies have also shown that outdoor activities can help in slowing down myopia progression even in cases of severe myopia.

Finnish chain of nursing homes, day-care centres in Turf Club Road. The programme is designed to offer more engagement for the dementia patients and their caregivers, who must also attend. The programme is also aimed at improving caregivers' skills, helping them to better care for their family members.

The programme, which began in a Finnish chain of nursing homes, is now being piloted in Singapore. It has been done elsewhere. The programme is designed to foster end-of-life care, to help dementia patients and their caregivers begin to talk about the possibility of death.

In addition, the programme is also designed to give caregivers a sense of autonomy, for example, by giving them control over choosing what to do with their time. The programme is also aimed at improving caregivers' skills, helping them to better care for their family members.