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Is myopia curable?

One common question posed to ophthalmologists is whether myopia can be cured. Although some individuals claim to have achieved reversal, scientific consensus indicates that the straightforward answer is "no." Myopia typically occurs when the eye grows excessively, either elongating front to back (axial myopia) or resulting in a steeply curved cornea (refractive myopia). Unfortunately, once the eye has grown out of shape, it is nearly impossible to restore it to its optimal form, leading to the conclusion that myopia cannot be cured.

While a complete reversal is not feasible, several treatments can help manage or alleviate myopic vision. Single-vision glasses or contact lenses can alter the way light enters the eye, refocusing it onto the correct point of the retina, thereby enabling clear distant vision. However, such measures do not slow down the eyeball's growth and are considered methods of myopia offsetting rather than cures. In some cases, adults may opt for surgical procedures like refractive surgery to reshape the cornea and correct myopic vision.

This brings us to the concept of myopia management. Myopia doesn't manifest suddenly; it develops gradually over time. Thus, interventions aimed at slowing down its progression may minimize the severity of myopia individuals have to contend with later in life. This is particularly crucial for children and young people, as myopia can begin as early as three years of age, with rapid progression in earlier years and a slowdown in adolescence before stabilizing in early adulthood [[1](https://www.ulster.ac.uk/research/topic/biomedical-sciences/research/optometry-and-vision-science/research/myopia-and-the-nicer-study)]. Early eye examinations are vital for detecting myopia before it advances significantly.

Research indicates a rising trend of myopia in children, with one study reporting a doubling of myopia cases in the last fifty years [[1](https://www.ulster.ac.uk/research/topic/biomedical-sciences/research/optometry-and-vision-science/research/myopia-and-the-nicer-study)]. Without intervention, these children could face severe myopia in adulthood, increasing the risk of various eye problems, such as retinal detachment [[2](https://www.snec.com.sg/patient-care/specialties-and-services/clinics-centres/myopia-centre/myopia-complications)]. Early detection and intervention can make a significant difference in such cases. While current myopia management options cannot cure myopia, they have the potential to slow its progression, reducing the severity of myopia later in life and lowering the likelihood of developing other eye conditions.

Several interventions are available, including the use of dual-focus lenses in glasses or contact lenses. These lenses not only provide clear distance vision but also manage peripheral light to slow eye growth and reduce myopia's development. Studies have shown that multifocal lenses can slow myopia progression by approximately 43% over three years [[3](https://www.nih.gov/news-events/news-releases/multifocal-contact-lenses-slow-myopia-progression-children)], with evidence of continued effectiveness over a six-year period [[4](https://www.nih.gov/news-events/news-releases/multifocal-contact-lenses-slow-myopia-progression-children)].

In addition to corrective lenses, lifestyle changes play a significant role in reducing myopia development. Spending more time outdoors has been linked to a 50% reduction in myopia risk [[5](https://www.nature.com/articles/s41598-021-85825-y)]. While outdoor time may not halt myopia's progression once it has begun, it still offers physical and psychological benefits. Minimizing close work, such as prolonged computer or phone use, can also help reduce myopia development.

These preventive strategies are not limited to children; adults can benefit from them as well. While myopia primarily starts in childhood, it can develop or worsen in adulthood due to factors like diabetes or extensive close work. Taking breaks from screens and engaging in outdoor activities or making lifestyle changes to manage diabetes risk can lower the likelihood of adult-onset myopia.

In conclusion, although a cure for myopia remains elusive, early myopia management can significantly slow its progression. By implementing a comprehensive plan as soon as myopia is detected, individuals can improve eye health and overall quality of life throughout their lifespan.

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Independent information on myopia and myopia management can be found on [myopiafocus.org](https://www.myopiafocus.org/what-is-childhood-myopia).

Please also consider signing this [change.org petition](https://chng.it/Ft25M75fpD) to get the NHS to recognise myopia as an ocular disease and improve funding for myopia management for children.

**Images:**

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A person looking at a magnifying glass

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