



# The Myopia Myth: The Truth About Nearsightedness and How to Prevent It

*Donald S. Rehm*

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One of the most persistent and harmful myths passed on from generation to generation by those who make their living caring for our health pertains to myopia. This myth declares that myopia or nearsightedness is inherited from one's parents, and that there is nothing to be done about it but to wear glasses or submit to corneal surgery. We are told by the optometrists and ophthalmologists to whom we go for help with our vision problems, as well as by state and federal public health services, to expect that the myopia will get steadily worse, requiring stronger lenses, until we reach adulthood when the myopia will stabilize.

The fact is that myopia is not inherited. It develops because of the unnatural way we use our eyes, and in nearly every case it can be prevented. This acquired myopia is caused by the excessive amount of reading and other close work that our modern society demands.

The myopia myth has its roots in and is kept alive by the greed, ignorance, callousness, and apathy that prevail in the eye care business. This book will present factual information about the real cause of myopia - information that until now has been kept from those who suffer from its handicap. It is important to educate the public about these prevention methods, for when the public demands better treatment for myopia the vision specialists will have to respond if they want to stay in business.

It is estimated that approximately one-third of the United States population suffers from myopia and needs glasses for clear distance vision. It is significant that in the fifth or sixth grades, only about five percent of the children are myopic, but that the percentage increases steadily through the school years until at the graduate level over fifty percent are myopic. Moreover, fully two-thirds of the graduate honor students are myopic. How can this possibly be considered normal?

Is it not strange that more parents do not ask for a logical reason why their children, normal in every other way, should suddenly suffer from failing vision at such an early age? Unfortunately, they have come to accept the abnormal as normal. Yet we do not find young children in such numbers suffering from deterioration of their senses of hearing, smell, taste, and touch. Why just vision? The obvious reason is that our vision is being used in a manner drastically different from the use for which nature has prepared it. Compare this high incidence of myopia with illiterate, primitive societies where almost no one is nearsighted. It is not inaccurate to speak of the situation as an epidemic of myopia, and it will continue to increase until the proper action is taken. It used to be common to see myopia develop around age nine, but it is now becoming common in youngsters five or six years old, because children are learning to read at an earlier age. Many children, while still under ten years of age, have myopia that has progressed to the point where they would be classified as legally blind...

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