

# THE GROWING IMPORTANCE OF MYOPIA MANAGEMENT IN PEDIATRIC OPTOMETRY IN PAKISTAN

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Myopia, commonly known as nearsightedness, is increasingly affecting children in Pakistan, and this trend raises serious concerns for their future vision health. While myopia can often be corrected with glasses or contact lenses, it can also progress and lead to more severe eye problems if not managed properly. Research shows that children who develop myopia early are at higher risk for severe visual impairments as adults. The impact of myopia extends beyond simple vision correction—it can affect a person's quality of life and long-term eye health.<sup>1</sup>

Many parents in Pakistan view myopia as a minor issue easily fixed with corrective lenses. This perception can be misleading and dangerous. A study conducted by Aaraj S et al revealed a strong association between low vitamin D and high body mass index with progression of myopia.<sup>2</sup> Without understanding the potential for progression and complications, families may not seek timely intervention. Raising awareness about the risks of myopia and the importance of early management is crucial.<sup>3</sup> Pediatric optometry is an emerging field in Pakistan, and there's a significant gap in specialized training. Many optometrists are skilled at prescribing glasses but lack the expertise to manage the progression of myopia effectively. Some of the effective methods identified for slowing myopia progression include topical low-dose atropine eye drops, defocus incorporated multiple segments (DIMS) spectacle lenses, highly aspherical lenslets target (HALT) lenses, diffusion optics technology (DOT) spectacle lenses, red light therapy (RLT), multifocal soft contact lenses, and orthokeratology.<sup>4</sup> Providing additional training and resources for optometrists is essential for improving myopia management.<sup>5</sup> Advanced treatments for myopia, such as special contact lenses and eye drops, can be expensive. Many families may struggle to afford these options. To make myopia management more accessible, financial support mechanisms, such as subsidies or insurance coverage, need to be incorporated to alleviate the burden on families.

One of the most effective ways to manage myopia is through regular eye exams. In addition, encouraging children to spend more time outdoors and reducing prolonged close-up activities can help slow myopia progression. New treatments, such as orthokeratology lenses and low-dose atropine drops, have shown promise in slowing myopia progression. Expanding access to these innovative solutions in Pakistan is crucial. To combat myopia effectively, Government health departments, schools, and eye care professionals should work together to create informative campaigns that highlight the importance of regular eye exams and proper myopia management.

Managing myopia in children is more than just a healthcare issue; it's a public health challenge that demands immediate attention. With the increasing prevalence of myopia in Pakistan, it's essential to enhance awareness, provide specialized training for optometrists, improve access to treatments, and promote regular eye check-ups. By addressing these areas, we can help ensure that children have the best possible vision and quality of life as they grow.

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