**(Date)**

**MEDIA RELEASE**

**Myopia in Children Growing at Alarming Rates**

***[Location] Optometrist urges parents to be aware and recognise if their child is at risk***

The majority (69%) of New Zealand (with children 0-17-years old) parents do not know what child myopia is and alarmingly, only 12% of parents recognise the health risk that their children might develop later in life from myopia.[[1]](#footnote-1) [Location] Optometrist, [Name] is calling on parents to be aware of myopia, the risk factors and that it can be managed.

[Optometrist] says, “Myopia, or short-sightedness causes blured distance vision, usually starts during childhood and typically progresses until a child stops growing. However, there are two main factors which can mean your child is more at risk of developing myopia: lifestyle and family history.

[Name] adds, “To slow the progression of myopia, and reduce longer term eye health issues, myopia needs to be managed. There are many evidence-based options now available which can slow the progression of myopia. High myopia is associated with eye health risks later in life so reducing the prevalence and impact of myopia and understanding influencing factors is critical.”

Myopia is forecast to reach epidemic proportions globally.[[2]](#footnote-2) Alarmingly, increases in the global prevalence of myopia and high myopia (a refractive error\*of at least -5.00D in either eye)[[3]](#footnote-3) mean that by 2020, it is estimated that 2 billion people worldwide will be affected.[[4]](#footnote-4) By 2050, it is estimated that more than 50% of the world’s population will have myopia and 10% or almost 1 billion will have high myopia.[[5]](#footnote-5)

Lifestyle: modern lifestyles may influence the development of myopia. These include:

* + Low levels of outdoor activity[[6]](#footnote-6) and associated factors including:
	+ Low levels of light exposure[[7]](#footnote-7)
	+ Prolonged near tasks[[8]](#footnote-8) such as reading and gaming on portable devices

Family history: The likelihood of developing myopia, particularly high myopia increases when one or both parents are myopic.[[9]](#footnote-9)14 However, the exact link between a family history of myopia and development of childhood myopia remains uncertain.[[10]](#footnote-10)15

For parents who are concerned that their child might be myopic, or at risk of developing myopia, [Name] has this advice. “The first step is to have your child’s eyes tested. If your child is diagnosed with myopia, it is important that you talk with your Optometrist about, not only correcting the immediate sight issue, but importantly what can be done to slow progression of myopia.

 “Being informed and having a discussion with your Optometrist around the best way to manage your child’s myopia is a critical first step,” says [Name].

For further information about child myopia talk to your Optometrist.

**KEY NEW ZEALAND STATISTICS:[[11]](#footnote-11)16**

**A recent survey looking at parental understanding and perceptions around child myopia in New Zealand shows:**

* 77% of parents of children under 12 years old believe being prescribed glasses is the best course of action if a primary school age child is diagnosed with myopia. In fact, there are many treatment options that should be discussed when managing myopia.
* Almost half (46%) of New Zealand parents of children aged 17 years and under admit they do not know what causes myopia.
* Only 10% of parents know of the lifestyle factors that have an impact on child myopia (low levels of outdoor activity, low levels of light exposure, prolonged near tasks such as reading and gaming on portable devices).
* 28% of New Zealand kids (17 years and under) have never been to have an eye test.
* 40% of New Zealand children have not been to an Optometrist to have an eye test before their ninth birthday.

Additional useful information about myopia can be found at www.childmyopia.com

ENDS

For media enquiries, please contact
[Optometrist contact details]

*\* Refractive error means that the shape of your eye does not bend light correctly, resulting in a blurred image. The main types of refractive errors are myopia (nearsightedness), hyperopia (farsightedness), presbyopia (loss of near vision with age) and astigmatism.*

1. *CooperVision Australia and New Zealand: Child Myopia in New Zealand – consumer perceptions survey. Conducted by YouGovGalaxy August/September 2018 between Wednesday 29 August and Monday 3 September 2018. The sample comprised 1,003 parents of children at home aged 0-18 years.*  [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. *The impact of myopia and high myopia: Report of the Joint World Health Organization – Brien Holden Vision Institute Global Scientific Meeting on Myopia. University of New South Wales, Sydney, Australia. 16-18 March 2015* [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. *ibid.*  [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. *ibid.* [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. *ibid.* [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. *He M, Xiang F, Zeng Y et al. Effect of Time Spent Outdoors at School on the Development of Myopia Among Children in China: A Randomized Clinical Trial. JAMA 2015; 314:1142-1148* [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. *Read SA, Collins MJ, Vincent SJ. Light Exposure and Eye Growth in Childhood. Investigative Ophthalmology and Visual Science 2015: 56(11):6779-6787* [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. *Ip JM, Saw SM, Rose KA, Morgan IG, Kifley A, Wang JJ, Mitchell P. Role of Near Work in Myopia: Findings in a Sample of Australian School Children. Investigative Ophthalmology and Visual Science 2008:49(7):2903-2910* [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. 14 *Lim LT, Gong Y, Ah-Kee EY, Xiao G, Zhang X. Impact of parental history of myopia on the development of myopia in mainland China school-aged children. Ophthalmology and  Eye Disease. 2014;6:31-5* [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. 15 *Ip J, Huynh S, Robaei D, Rose K, Morgan I, Smith W, Kifley A, Mitchell P. Ethnic differences in the impact of parental myopia: Findings from a population-based study of 12-year old Australian children. Investigative Ophthalmology and Visual Science. 2007:48:2520-2528* [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. 16 *CooperVision Australia and New Zealand: Child Myopia in New Zealand – consumer perceptions survey. op.cit.* [↑](#footnote-ref-11)