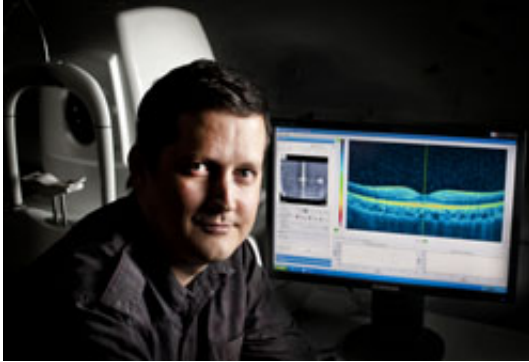


# Play outside -- it's good for your eyes

June 1 2012

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Dr Scott Read

(Medical Xpress) -- New university research aims to shed light on why being outside can help children see better.

The research, led by Dr Scott Read from Queensland University of Technology (QUT)'s School of Optometry, will eventually help health practitioners to better advise people on strategies for reducing the incidence of [nearsightedness](#), as well as strategies for reducing its progression.

"The exact cause of nearsightedness, or [myopia](#), is not clear," Dr Read said.

"However, a number of recent studies have identified an association between higher levels of outdoor activities and a reduced chance of

developing nearsightedness.

"Our study will be looking at why this association exists."

The research team is looking for short sighted and non-short sighted children aged between 11 and 14 years of age to participate in this research.

"We will be considering school age children, because that's when nearsightedness tends to develop," he said.

"We will periodically measure the length of people's eyes and structures within the eye, such as the [retina](#) and choroid, which are thought to be important in myopia development."

The research team will also measure the children's levels of [physical activity](#), as well as their exposure to light.

Dr Read was previously involved in a study which found short-term changes in the eye occur during exercise. Therefore his team will be considering whether it is the participation in physical activities which is the relevant factor, more so than the fact a person is outdoors.

"Some researchers have also suggested that [light exposure](#) might be the reason for the reduced incidence of nearsightedness," he said.

A report of the results from the [vision screening](#) tests will be provided to parents or guardians of participating children, and a \$20 gift voucher will be given at each session, to compensate people for their time and travel costs.

Nearsightedness is a condition where the length of the eye is too long - blurring a person's long distance vision. It is typically treated with

glasses, although in later life it is associated with potentially serious eye health problems.

"The incidence of nearsightedness is on the rise. Roughly 20 to 25 per cent of the adult population in Australia is affected, and in some Asian countries this figure is as high as 80 per cent," Dr Read said.

Provided by Queensland University of Technology

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