



## Press release

### **Myopia epidemic can be reduced by changing behavior**

*Queen Máxima launches awareness campaign*

*'Knikker myopie de wereld uit' of the Dutch Eye Fund*

**UTRECHT, 6 July 2022 – Over the next thirty years, at least 140,000 people in the Netherlands are expected to become visually impaired and another 50,000 blind as a result of myopia. Through prevention, the use of atropine, special contact lenses and innovative glasses, this epidemic of myopia can be reduced.**

This is evident from research<sup>1</sup> conducted by Catalyze Group on behalf of the Dutch Eye Fund and CooperVision Specialty EyeCare EMEA. Because not enough outdoor play and too much close looking at screens or books are important causes of myopia in children, Eye Fund started the campaign "Knikker myopie de wereld uit". It was officially launched today, 6 July, by Queen Máxima.



*Queen Máxima today launched the awareness campaign 'Knikker myopie de wereld uit' at Erasmus MC. This campaign is intended to make parents and children, as well as Eye Care Professionals and people in education, aware of the consequences of looking too closely and a lack of enough daylight on children's eyes.*

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<sup>1</sup> The study by Catalyze Group commissioned by the Dutch Eye Fund, in collaboration with CooperVision Specialty EyeCare EMEA was conducted between February and March 2022. It combined insights from a literature review and desk research with a health-economic analysis on part of the available data. Mentioned figures and studies in this press release were used as sources and can be found in the Catalyze study. The report can be downloaded via [www.coopervisionsec.eu/myopia-report-2022](http://www.coopervisionsec.eu/myopia-report-2022).

Myopia is the eye disease of the future. Currently, a quarter of thirteen-year-olds in the Netherlands are myopic. This can lead to poor vision or blindness in later life in one in three. Since the 1960s, myopia has become five times more common and if this trend continues, it is estimated that the number of visually impaired people in Europe will triple by 2055. In that year, the Netherlands is projected to have between 140,000 and 210,000 visual impaired sighted people due to myopia and between 53,000 and 80,000 blind people. A doubling to tripling.

Due to this increase, the Catalyze study predicts major consequences for healthcare, the economy and the patients themselves. In the Netherlands, the number of operations for detached retina due to (high) myopia increased by a staggering 44% between 2009 and 2016. In the coming years, the waiting time at specialized ophthalmologists and surgeries in the hospital will increase. The economic costs due to employee attrition already amount to 1 billion euros per year and are predicted to rise to 2.3 to 3.5 billion euros by 2055. For patients, work as well as daily activities such as driving or exercising become difficult or even impossible. This has a negative impact on their lives, making people with myopia more likely to suffer from anxiety or depression. Yet according to the study, Eye Care Professionals in the Netherlands are less concerned than their colleagues in Asia and the rest of Europe.

Gabi Steenbekkers, optometrist and Myopia Management Manager at CooperVision Specialty EyeCare: „There are currently effective treatments and good solutions for slowing progressive myopia in children. But these only have an effect if they are prescribed adequately. Dutch Eye Care Professionals still appear reluctant to prescribe corrections for myopia at a younger age and show less concern about the increase than their foreign colleagues. Therapies and relatively simple preventive measures, such as an annual eye check, are needed to reduce the rising incidence of myopia on a global level. Now that we have seen the increase in cases during corona lockdowns, this is a good time for all Eye Care Professionals in the eye care chain to spread the word about the importance of myopia management. Every diopter counts."



*Gabi Steenbekkers optometrist and Myopia Management Manager at CooperVision Specialty EyeCare explained the findings from the newly presented Catalyze study in his presentation to Queen Máxima and other invited guests.*

Myopia may be partly hereditary but is largely related to lifestyle. Daylight has been known to have a preventive effect since the last century. According to many studies, the condition is increasing because children have less outdoor time and look at a TV, computer, smart phone or other screen more often. Working from home and homeschooling during the corona pandemic only exacerbated this. The researchers found strong evidence in several studies that the development of myopia can be delayed by allowing children to spend more time outdoors. Specific glasses and contact lenses for managing myopia can possibly reduce the progression. The drug Atropine can even reduce the progression of myopia by 75%, but is still rarely prescribed in the Netherlands. Although various interventions are currently available, myopia is still not curable. The researchers observe a lack of information and education among eye professionals in all areas.

To curb the expected growth in the number of diagnoses of myopia, several new and innovative solutions have been made and are still under development. Many clinical studies have been published in the areas of contact lenses, spectacle lenses, atropine dosages, surgical procedures and laser treatment, among others. By transforming school programs with more outdoor activities, the increase in the number of children with myopia can also be reduced. In addition, it is important to make parents more aware of the risks of myopia, so that they get their child's eyes checked as early as possible. For Eye Care Professionals, organizations such as the World Council of Optometry have created a standard of care for managing myopia that includes mitigation, measurement and proper management of myopia, and public education.

Monique van Bijsterveld, Executive Director of the Dutch Eye Fund Foundation, "We take it so much for granted that our eyes do what they have to do, but unfortunately that can change. More and more people, including children, are affected by low vision. In 50% of cases, blindness and low vision are preventable. Have your eyes checked regularly, especially if there are symptoms or when eye disorders run in the family. We as Eye Fund are doing everything we can to reach and inform the Netherlands and parents and teachers in particular about how to keep (children's) eyes healthy."

#### **END OF PRESS RELEASE**

#### **About the Dutch Eye Fund**

The Eye Fund believes in a future where everyone can continue to see what they love. The number of people with eye problems is increasing and the solution lies in education, prevention and more eye research. The Eye Fund finances scientific research into the prevention and treatment of eye problems. The foundation also supports patient associations in improving the quality of life for people with visual impairments. The Eye Fund does not receive any subsidies and is supported by donors, businesses and the National Postcode Lottery. For more information see also [oogfonds.nl](https://oogfonds.nl) and [oogfonds.nl/knikker](https://oogfonds.nl/knikker)

**About CooperVision Specialty EyeCare**

CooperVision Specialty EyeCare (SEC) specializes in producing custom contact lenses with the highest precision and quality. The SEC division is part of the CooperVision organization, one of the world's largest contact lens manufacturers. We sell our products in more than 100 countries, from China to Europe and from Africa to North and South America. CooperVision SEC offers special lenses and lenses for children that are scientifically proven to inhibit myopia (nearsightedness). CooperVision SEC's mission is to enable maximum visual acuity for every person worldwide, regardless of the condition of the eye. So that everyone can experience his or her world to the fullest. For more information, visit [www.coopervisionsec.eu](http://www.coopervisionsec.eu) and [www.coopervisionsec.eu/myopia-management](http://www.coopervisionsec.eu/myopia-management).

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