

# HEALTH REPORT



## Treehouse Eyes is innovating eye care for children

"Don't stand too close to the TV," my mother used to say. "You'll go blind."

That statement is a touch dramatic, but not too far from the truth. Today, children face an unprecedented epidemic of myopia, a condition more commonly known as nearsightedness.

### The pediatric myopia epidemic

Traditional care fits children for glasses at a very early age without treating the underlying problem and then increases the strength of the prescription as needed as they get older. The glasses are only a bandaid. Glasses do not treat the underlying health issue of myopia: an elongated eyeball,

or an eye that is too curved in front. This causes the light from objects that are far away to focus in front of the retina, rather than directly on it.

Currently, 10 million children in the United States have myopia. This number is the result of a 66 percent increase over the past 30 years. If the current rate of growth continues, that number will balloon to over 30 million children by 2050. Most eye health experts agree that the societal trends of increased screen time and lack of outdoor time are contributing factors to this growth.

While some people may be tempted to brush this off, consider this: having myopia significantly increases the risk of much more severe disease including glaucoma, cataracts, retinal detachments, and macular degeneration. All of these conditions can cause blindness, and the younger that someone develops myopia, the higher the risk climbs for these other diseases of the eye.

Scientific evidence around the impact of myopia on long-term eye health continues to grow. Mildly myopic patients have a 400 percent increased risk of retinal detachment. Moderate to high myopia takes that risk up to a 1000 percent increase. Half of all retinal detachments not caused by trauma can be attributed to myopia.

### Treehouse Eyes takes a different tack

To combat these alarming statistics, the co-founders of a new company called Treehouse Eyes™, Matt Oerding and Dr. Gary Gerber, developed an innovative patent-pending set of protocols to exclusively treat myopia in children and give them better vision for life. Oerding is a former director at Novartis with a specialty in eye care products in the United States and abroad. Dr. Gary Gerber has been an optometrist for over 20 years. His independent optometry practice was among the top one percent of practices in the world.

### The Treehouse Eyes difference

The world is clearly ready for this idea. In only six months, the founders raised almost \$2 million in seed funding and recruited an advisory board that includes the founder of Lenscrafters and some of the world's leading experts in myopia control. The U.S. market for myopia treatment is estimated at \$600 million annually.

"The types of treatment Treehouse Eyes™ offers are non-invasive and supported by strong evidence of their efficacy and safety," said Erin Stahl, pediatric ophthalmologist and advisory board member for Treehouse Eyes™. "Most eye doctors have busy practices which makes it difficult to recommend and provide the types of customized treatments Treehouse Eyes™ will offer. I'm excited there is finally a place dedicated to providing this type of needed service for children with myopia."

The Treehouse Vision System™ protocols provide a customized solution for each child after a thorough and comprehensive vision exam at a Treehouse Eyes™ location. Over 5,000 children have been treated by the clinical advisors that helped develop the Treehouse Vision System.

Not only did Oerding and Gerber conceive of a new treatment; they also reimagined the entire design of their centers. Working alongside the interior designers who have developed retail environments for Nike and Coach, Treehouse Eyes™ created a welcoming, kid-friendly environment that does not feel like a standard issue doctor's office. The goal of the ambience is to engage children and their parents by providing a nurturing positive space for them to explore individualized treatment options that literally help children see a brighter and clearer future. Additionally, the centers schedule appointments to accommodate the busy lives of parents and children, including appointments before school, in the evenings, and on weekends.

### Treehouse Eyes in the D.C. area

The first two locations will open in the greater Washington D.C. area this summer—one in Bethesda, Maryland and one in Tysons Corner, Virginia. The D.C. area has a high prevalence of pediatric myopia. Over the next two years, 20 locations will open in areas where a high instance of pediatric myopia occurs, including the northeast and California.

While it's impossible to predict exactly how the evolution of technology will impact the health of our children, one thing is clear: the individualized approach created by Treehouse Eyes™ stands to benefit many children and give them a healthier view of their future.

**About this section:** This special advertising section was prepared by independent writer Christa Rose Avampato. The production of this section did not involve the news or editorial staff of The Washington Post.



You help nurture his dreams of a bright future.

We'll treat his myopia for a lifetime of better vision.

Kids are growing up with much more screen time and less outdoor time. As a result, myopia - nearsightedness, where far away objects appear blurry - is rapidly increasing.

Stronger glasses every year aren't the answer. While necessary, glasses only treat the symptoms of myopia. And, myopia increases the risk of serious eye diseases as your child grows.

We have proven alternatives that help prevent myopia from getting worse. Visit [TreehouseEyes.com/DC](http://TreehouseEyes.com/DC) or call our **Bethesda Location: 240-297-5542** or **Tysons Corner Location: 703-991-2768** to schedule a consultation. Let us help give your child better vision and healthier eyes for life.



Optometry services in Virginia are provided by Treehouse Eyes - Tysons Corner P.C., an independent optometry practice within Treehouse Eyes