

[IMAGE]

Reminders Matter

By Editorial Staff

Is *the outdoors* a foreign phrase to your kids in the "Age of Staring"? With so much of the average child's day consumed by screen time, outdoor time can be challenging, to say the least. The solution, particularly with younger children who may require parental supervision, may be to remind parents that it's time for their kids to spend some time outdoors.

Researchers divided second-grade children into two groups to compare whether text reminders, sent to parents periodically, were more effective than no reminders in controlling *myopia* (nearsightedness), which can be caused by spending too much time indoors. So, while the study evaluated the influence of text reminders on this aspect of vision, it indirectly evaluated whether reminders could affect children's time spent outdoors (which presumably would increase the chances of participating in physical activity; or if nothing else, getting some much-needed vitamin D courtesy of exposure to sunlight).

Parents of children in the text group were sent text messages twice daily for one year, with messages reminding parents to take their children outdoors. Children wore portable light meters that recorded outdoor light exposure on randomly selected days before and after the intervention. Findings, published in *JAMA Pediatrics*, revealed that text reminders were superior to no reminders in improving control of myopia. In other words, a win-win for children's health: better eyesight and more time spent outdoors!

Reminders matter. In this case, it's ironic that the very thing that may be preventing you (and your children) from venturing outdoors more (technology) may be the solution, in the form of periodic text reminders to stop staring at a screen and spend some quality time outdoors. Here's your final reminder: Don't take your phone with you!

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