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## **UW contact lens study aims to slow nearsightedness in children**

WATERLOO — Specially designed contact lenses with the potential to slow nearsightedness in children are being studied at the University of Waterloo.

The Centre for Contact Lens Research launched a three-year study to find out if a new type of contact can combat myopia in children eight to 12 years old.

The lenses keep a clear focus at the outside edge of the retina, and it's hoped that clear peripheral vision will prevent the eye from lengthening from front to back, which is the cause of myopia.

"The theory is there's less incentive for the eye to grow," said optometrist Dr. Jill Woods. "When the eye overgrows, it becomes nearsighted."

Boosting that peripheral focus has been considered for some time, but now there's the capability to manufacture contact lenses that can do it. It has been tried with glasses, but contacts offer more promise because they wrap around the eye's contours and move with it.

Similar research with contacts in Asia is showing promise, Woods said.

Children enrolled in the study will get free disposable contacts, training how to wear and handle them, followup visits and some compensation for time. While the study is over three years, there is no mandatory commitment.

Research shows children as young as eight can successfully wear contacts and handle them independently. The study uses daily disposable lenses that are thrown out at night and a fresh pair put in the next morning to eliminate the need for cleaning.

"It makes it simpler," Woods said.

And there are advantages for children to wear contacts over glasses, especially if a child doesn't like how glasses look and contacts are more practical for sports and active play.

Woods said the researchers hope to see a statistical difference in the children wearing the special contacts since that could mean better vision going into adolescence and adulthood.

For more information about the study, phone 519-888-4742.

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