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Eye care for the way you live today...and tomorrow.

Parents' Guide for Detecting Vision Problems

Observations of your child in school and at home are very important to order to determine whether your child has an undiagnosed vision problem. Children with learning-related vision problems rarely report symptoms. They assume that everyone sees things the same as they do.

The following is a list of signs and symptoms that may indicate that your child has a vision problem:

Appearance of Eyes:

- One eye turns in or out at any time
- Reddened eyes or lids
- Eyes tear excessively
- Frequent styes on eyelids

Complaints when Using Eyes at Desk:

- Headaches in forehead or temple area
- Burning or itchy eyes after reading
- Print blurs after reading a short time
- Complaints of seeing double
- Words move or 'swim' on the page

Behavioral Signs of Visual Problems:

- Eye Movements
- Head turns as reading across the page
- Loses place frequently during reading
- Needs finger or marker to keep place
- Short attention span in reading or copying
- Frequently omits words
- Writes up or downhill on the page
- Rereads or skips lines unknowingly
- Orients drawings poorly on the page
- Repeats letters within words
- Omits letters, numbers or phrases
- Misaligns digits in number columns
- Squints, closes or covers one eye
- Tilts head significantly when working at a table
- Odd working posture for table activities



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- Eye-Hand Coordination
- Avoidance of near-centered work
- Poor handwriting
- Difficulty copying from chalkboard

Secondary Symptoms

- Low self-esteem
- Short attention span
- Fatigue, frustration, stress
- Day-Dreaming
- Smart in most things except school

May be labeled

- Lazy
- Dyslexic
- Attention deficit disorder
- Slow learner
- Behavioral problems
- Works below potential

If you notice several signs or symptoms described above, a developmental vision evaluation is recommended. Not all vision evaluations are the same. A developmental vision evaluation will assess all of the visual skills that are developed following birth.

The evaluation will assess your child's ability to:

- Fixate
- Follow
- Focus
- Coordinate their two eyes
- Assess eye-hand coordination
- Assess visual perceptual skills necessary for learning:
- Visual discrimination
- Visual recall
- Visualization
- Visual Thinking
- Visual Logic
- Visual-spatial knowledge

Eye Exams for Children

Eye exams for children are extremely important. Experts say up to 25 percent of school-aged children have vision problems that can affect learning.



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Also, early identification of vision problems in children is crucial because, if left untreated, some eye problems can cause permanent vision loss.

When Should Kids Have Their Eyes Examined?

According to the American Optometric Association (AOA), a child's first eye exam should take place at 6 months of age. Thereafter, exams should be performed at age 3, and just before they enter kindergarten or the first grade (age 5 or 6).

For school-aged children, the AOA recommends an eye exam every two years if no vision correction is required. Children who need eyeglasses or contact lenses should be examined more frequently - either annually or according to their eye doctor's recommendations.

Early eye exams are important because children need the following visual skills for learning:

- Near vision
- Distance vision
- Eye teaming (binocularity) skills
- Eye movement skills
- Focusing skills
- Peripheral awareness
- Eye/hand coordination

Scheduling Your Child's Eye Exam

Your family doctor or pediatrician might be the first medical professional to examine your child's eyes. If eye problems are suspected during routine physical examinations, a referral should be made to an optometrist (OD) for a comprehensive eye exam.

Tests performed during an eye exam may depend on your child's age, but a comprehensive exam generally will include a case history, vision testing, determination of whether eyeglasses are needed, testing of eye alignment, an eye health examination and a consultation regarding the findings of the exam.

After you've made the appointment, you may be sent a case history form by mail, or you may be given one when you check in at the doctor's office. The case history form may ask about your child's birth history, including birth weight and whether or not the pregnancy was full-term. Your eye doctor also may ask whether complications occurred during the pregnancy or delivery. The form may also inquire about your child's medical history, including current medications and any allergies.



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Be sure to tell your eye doctor if your child has a history of premature birth, has delayed motor development, engages in frequent eye rubbing, blinks excessively, fails to maintain eye contact, has trouble maintaining focus, has poor eye tracking skills or has failed a vision screening.

Also, be sure to tell your child's eye doctor if there is a family history of eye problems, such as nearsightedness, farsightedness, astigmatism, misaligned eyes (strabismus) or amblyopia ("lazy eye").

Eye Testing for Infants

It takes some time for a baby's vision skills to develop. To assess whether your infant's eyes are developing normally, your eye doctor may use one or more of the following tests:

- **Pupil testing** to evaluate if your child's eyes react normally to light.
- **"Fixate and follow" testing** to see if your child can focus on an object and follow it as it moves. Infants should be able to perform this task quite well by the time they are 3 months old.
- **Preferential looking** involves using sets of cards where one card is blank and the other contains a pattern of lines of varying degrees of width and contrast. Vision is assessed by whether or not the card with the stripes attracts your infant or young child's attention more than the blank card when both are displayed side-by-side.

Eye Testing for Pre-School Children

Pre-school children can have their eyes thoroughly tested even if they don't yet know the alphabet or are too young or too shy to answer questions.

Some common eye tests used when examining young children include:

- **A special eye chart** that displays familiar objects such as an apple, house, square and circle instead of letters of the alphabet. The young child can identify the objects verbally or point to a matching symbol on a card in their hands.
- **Retinoscopy** is a test that involves shining a light into the eye to observe how it reflects from the retina (the light-sensitive inner lining of the back of the eye). This test helps eye doctors determine the child's eyeglass prescription.

Random Dot Stereopsis uses special 3D glasses to determine how well the two eyes work as a team