

Protect the  
**VISION**  
of our  
future





## There are two ways to help your child maintain good vision for life:

1. Have your child's vision screened and/or checked by an eye care professional (optometrist or ophthalmologist)
2. Know the signs of possible eye problems

## Why is vision important for learning?

Without good vision, a child's ability to learn about the world becomes more difficult. If vision problems are not detected and treated early, they can lead to permanent vision loss and learning difficulties. If a child has poor vision, it makes it much harder for them to succeed in school, sports, social situations, and in life.

- Vision problems affect 1 in 20 preschoolers
- 80% of learning depends on good vision
- 1 in 4 school-age children experience vision problems

## How are vision problems detected?

Most children believe that the way they see the world is the way everyone sees it...even if their vision is blurred, doubled, or they can only see through one eye. The best way to find out if your child's vision is normal is through regular vision screenings and eye exams by an eye care professional. These exams can lead to treatment that is right for your child's eyes and lifestyle.

## Why are vision screenings and eye exams important for children?

A screening indicates possible vision problems. Children can pass a school eye test and still have undetected vision problems that are affecting their school work. Results of the vision screening are used to help assess whether a child needs to see an eye care professional for a more thorough evaluation.

# 1. When should a child have their vision and eye health checked?

- **6 to 12 months**

Between 6 months and 1 year of age, infants should be checked for good eye health by a thorough vision screening or comprehensive eye exam by an eye care professional.

- **Age 3**

Similarly, at age 3, a child's vision and eye health should be tested by a vision screening or comprehensive eye exam by an eye care professional.

- **Age 5 (school age)**

A vision screening or eye exam by an eye care professional should be conducted when a child reaches school age.

# 2. Are some children more likely to have eye problems?

**Yes!** The following factors may mean your child is more likely to develop an eye problem:

- Your child was born prematurely
- You have a family history of eye problems (such as lazy eye, misaligned eyes, eye tumors, or childhood cataracts)
- Your child has had an eye injury (problems resulting from childhood eye injuries may develop much later in life)

# 3. Who is an eye care professional?

- Optometrist
- Ophthalmologist





## Signs of possible eye problems

If one or more of these signs appear, take your child to an eye care professional for a comprehensive vision and eye health exam.

### What do your child's eyes look like?

- eyes don't line up, one eye appears crossed or turns out
- eyelids are red-rimmed, crusted or swollen
- eyes are watery or red

### How does your child act?

- rubs eyes a lot
- closes or covers one eye to read
- has trouble reading or doing other close-up work, or holds objects very close to the eyes to see.
- blinks more than usual or becomes easily frustrated when doing close-up work
- child says things are blurry or hard to see
- squints eyes, frowns or tilts head on a regular basis

### What does your child say?

- "My eyes are itchy," "my eyes are burning" or "my eyes feel scratchy."
- "I can't see that very well."
- After doing close-up work, your child says "I feel dizzy," "I have a headache" or "I feel sick/my tummy feels funny."
- "Everything looks blurry," or "I see double."

**Remember, your child may still have an eye problem even if he or she does not complain or has not shown any unusual signs**

# Common vision problems among children

## **Farsightedness (Hyperopia)**

In hyperopia, the eyeball is too short for the normal focusing power of the eye. Images of near objects appear blurry.

## **Nearsightedness (Myopia)**

In myopia, the eyeball is too long for the normal focusing power of the eye. Images of distant objects appear blurry.

## **Astigmatism**

Astigmatism results primarily from an irregular shape of the cornea, the transparent "window" at the front of the eye. Children with astigmatism typically see vertical lines more clearly than horizontal ones, and sometimes the reverse.

## **Crossed or Wandering Eye (Strabismus)**

Strabismus is a word for eyes that are not straight or do not line up with each other. If the problem is not treated, it can cause lazy eye.

## **Lazy Eye (Amblyopia)**

Amblyopia, is a loss of vision in an eye that is not fully correctable with glasses or contact lenses. Crossed eyes, eyes that don't line up, or one eye that sees more clearly than the other can cause amblyopia. The earlier lazy eye is detected, the greater the chance of preventing permanent vision loss.



## Helpful tips when taking your child to an eye doctor:

1. Ask your relatives, friends and neighbors if they know the name of an eye care professional who is good with children.
2. Schedule the appointment when your child is not likely to be sleepy or hungry. If your child has a "cranky" time of day, schedule around it.
3. Make a list of your questions and bring it with you. Take notes when speaking to the eye care professional, so that you can refer to them later.
4. Have a plan ready in case you need to spend time in the waiting room. Bring a favorite game, coloring book or small toy that your child can play with quietly. A snack can also help to pass the time.
5. Let your child watch a family member get an eye exam. Have the eye care professional explain what is being done, step-by-step, and encourage the child to watch and ask questions.
6. Bring your child's favorite cuddly toy. The doctor can "examine" the bear or doll and holding a toy may keep little hands off expensive equipment.
7. Relax. Children look to adults for cues: if you seem nervous, your child may become anxious. A trip to the eye care professional should be fun for both of you.



# Your **child's sight** is **priceless**

Good vision helps your child learn about the world. Vision develops and changes as a child grows. Taking care of your child's eyes from birth is part of helping your child grow and develop.

## Additional educational information and resources:

**Prevent Blindness America**  
[www.preventblindness.org](http://www.preventblindness.org)  
1-800-331-2020

**The Vision Council**  
[www.thevisioncouncil.org](http://www.thevisioncouncil.org)  
1-866-826-0290

**American Optometric Association**  
[www.aoa.org](http://www.aoa.org)  
1-800-365-2219

**InfantSEE**  
[www.infantsee.org](http://www.infantsee.org)  
1-888-396-EYES

**American Academy of Pediatrics**  
[www.aap.org](http://www.aap.org)  
1-847-434-4000

**American Association for Pediatric Ophthalmology and Strabismus**  
[www.aapos.org](http://www.aapos.org)

This brochure was made possible by a National Eye Institute grant awarded to the Idaho Children's Vision Coalition. The coalition was founded in 2007 by Dr. Sarah Marossy and is dedicated to saving children's vision through educational resources, preventative care initiatives and collaborations with various agencies and schools. For additional children's vision resources go to:

[www.kidsvisioncoalition.org](http://www.kidsvisioncoalition.org)