Story 1: Celebrate National Eye Exam Month: Get Your Eyes Tested!

Having your vision checked is an important part of staying healthy. Knowing what the exam should cover and when to have these, as outlined below, can help ensure your sight lasts a lifetime!

During an eye exam, an eye doctor reviews your medical history and completes a series of tests to determine the health of your eyes. The information from an eye exam may lead to medical procedures or prescriptions. Eye examinations should take place periodically as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Before Age 3</td>
<td>All children should have their eyes checked before the age of 3 years. If there is family history of childhood vision problems, or if the child has a wandering, crossed, or other eye problem, his or her eyes should be checked earlier.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-20</td>
<td>Every one to two years, or as recommended.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-40</td>
<td>Every one to two years, unless you experience any problems such as vision changes, pain, flashes of light, new floaters, or tearing, or if you sustain an eye injury.</td>
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<tr>
<td>40-64</td>
<td>Have baseline eye exam at 40, unless you’re having symptoms or have risk factor for eye disease. If you have symptoms or a risk factor, such as high blood pressure, diabetes or a family history of eye disease, consult your ophthalmologist or optometrist to discuss how often you should be examined.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65+</td>
<td>Every one to two years.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Story 2: Annual Eye Exams can Save Sight for People with Diabetes

Diabetic retinopathy is the leading cause of vision loss among working age adults worldwide. While the USA is home to the world’s largest number of children and adolescents with type 1 diabetes, it is estimated to have 30.2 million people between the age of 20-79 with diabetes as well.

Diabetic retinopathy, the most common diabetic eye disease, occurs when blood vessels in the retina change. Sometimes the vessels swell and leak fluid or even close off completely. In other cases, abnormal new blood vessels grow on the retina surface. Oftentimes, those with diabetic retinopathy do not notice changes in their vision in the early stages of the disease. Indeed, according to the National Eye Institute, between 40 and 45 percent of Americans diagnosed with diabetes have some stage of diabetic retinopathy, although only about half are aware. The
longer someone has had diabetes, the higher the risk of developing the condition. Also, as it progresses, it usually causes vision loss that, in many cases, cannot be reversed.³

The American Academy of Ophthalmology recommends close follow up eye exams for patients with diabetic retinopathy depending on their retinopathy severity.⁴ “I recommend regular eye exams to diabetic retinopathy patients depending on their retinopathy severity, and stress the importance of glycemic and systemic medical control to ensure that patients are receiving the highest possibility for successful treatment,” said Radwan Ajlan, MBBCh, FRCS(c), KU Eye Faculty.

References:


Story 3: Don’t Overlook your Child’s Eye Health when Getting Ready for the new School Year!

It’s back to school time and that means scrambling to buy new clothes, notebooks, backpacks, and other supplies for the new school year. August is also Children’s Eye Health and Safety Month and healthy vision, one of the most important necessities, is too often omitted from parents’ checklists.

Why is regular vision screening so important?
Good vision is key to a child’s physical development, success in school and overall well-being. The vision system is not fully formed in babies and young children, and equal input from both eyes is necessary for the brain’s vision centers to develop normally. If a young child’s eyes cannot send clear images to the brain, his or her vision may become limited in ways that cannot be corrected later in life. But if problems are detected early, it is usually possible to treat them effectively.¹

When and how should screening be done?
During a vision exam, an eye doctor reviews medical history and completes a series of tests to determine the health of your child’s eyes. This information may lead to medical procedures or prescriptions. For children and young adults, eye examinations should take place periodically as follows:

**Before Age 3**
All children should have their eyes checked before the age of 3 years. If there is family history of childhood vision problems, or if the child has a wandering, crossed, or other eye problem, his or her eyes should be checked earlier.

**3-20**
Every one to two years, or as recommended.

**What’s the difference between vision screening and an eye exam?**
In contrast to vision screening, a comprehensive eye exam can facilitate diagnosis of visual problems. It involves the use of eye drops to dilate the pupil, enabling a more thorough investigation of the overall health of the eye and the visual system. The American Academy of Ophthalmology advises parents to seek a comprehensive eye exam if:

- Their child fails a vision screening.
- Vision screening is inconclusive or cannot be performed.
- Referred by a pediatrician or school nurse.
- Their child has a vision complaint or observed abnormal visual behavior, or is at risk for developing eye problems. Children with medical conditions (e.g., Down’s syndrome, prematurity, juvenile idiopathic arthritis, neurofibromatosis) or a family history of amblyopia, strabismus, retinoblastoma, congenital cataracts or congenital glaucoma are at higher risk for developing pediatric eye problems.
- Their child has a learning disability, developmental delay, neuropsychological condition or behavioral issue.¹

¹Source: https://www.aao.org/eye-health/tips-prevention/children-eye-screening

**Story 4: Four Hidden Signs of Vision Problems in Kids**

As children grow and change from year to year, so do their eyes and vision. School demands intense visual involvement, including reading, writing, computer and chalkboard/smartboard work. Even physical education and sports require strong vision. If their eyes aren’t up to the task, a child may feel tired, have trouble concentrating, and have problems in school.
Sometimes parents can tell if their child has a vision problem. For instance, their child may squint, hold reading material very close to their face, or complain about things appearing blurry. However, there are some less obvious signs of vision problems.

Here are four signs that could point to possible vision problems in kids:

**Having a short attention span.** Your child might seem to quickly lose interest in games, projects or activities that require using their eyes for an extended period of time.

**Losing their place when reading.** As your child reads (aloud or silently), they may have difficulty seeing to keep track of where they are on the page.

**Avoiding reading and other close activities.** Whether they are subtle or obvious about it, your child may choose to avoid reading, drawing, playing games or doing other projects that require focusing up close.

**Turning their head to the side.** A child may turn their head to the side when looking at something in front of them. This may be a sign of a refractive error, including astigmatism. Turning their head helps the child see better.

Success in school is closely tied to eye health. That’s why it is so important for kids to have regular eye screenings with an ophthalmologist or another professional who is properly trained to assess vision in school-aged children. The earlier a vision problem is found and treated, the better off your child will be—in and out of school.¹

¹Source: https://www.aao.org/eye-health/tips-prevention/four-hidden-signs-of-vision-problems-in-kids

**Story 5: School Sports: Go Team but go Safely!**

When children participate in sports, recreation, crafts or home projects, it’s important for them to know eye safety practices and use protective glasses as appropriate. Each year thousands of children sustain eye damage or even blindness from accidents at home, at play or in the car. More than 90 percent of all eye injuries can be prevented through use of suitable protective eyewear.

Sports deserve particular attention, because eye injuries occur fairly often in children and young adult athletes: between the ages of five and 14, most sports-related injuries in the U.S. occur while playing baseball. Learn more about eye injuries and prevention.

**Preventing Injuries**

- Children should wear sports eye protectors made with polycarbonate lenses for baseball, basketball, football, racquet sports, soccer, hockey, lacrosse, paintball.
- All chemicals and sprays must be kept out of reach of small children.
- Parents and others who provide care and supervision for children need to practice safe use of common items that can cause serious eye injury, such as paper clips, pencils, scissors, bungee cords, wire coat hangers and rubber bands.
• Teach your children to be EyeSmart by safeguarding your own sight with ANSI-approved protective eyewear during potentially dangerous yard work and household repairs or projects.
• Only purchase age-appropriate toys.
• Avoid projectile toys such as darts, bows and arrows, and missile-firing toys.
• Look for toys marked with "ASTM", which means the product meets the national safety standards set by the American Society for Testing and Materials.
• Use safety gates at the top and bottom of stairs. Pad or cushion sharp corners. Put locks on all cabinets and drawers that kids can reach.
• Do not allow your children to play with non-powder rifles, pellet guns or BB guns. They are extremely dangerous and have been reclassified as firearms and removed from toy departments.
• Do not allow children anywhere near fireworks, especially bottle rockets. These fireworks pose a serious risk of eye injury and have been banned in several states.
• When very small children (age 4 and younger) are bitten by dogs, eye injuries occur about 15 percent of the time. The dog is usually one the child is familiar with, and second attacks by the same dog are likely to cause more serious injury. It is recommended that any dog that bites a child be removed from the household.
• On the road, make sure children are properly secured in baby carriers and child safety seats and that the seat and shoulder belts fit well. Children age 12 and younger should never ride in the front seat. Store loose items in the trunk or secured on the floor, as any loose object can become a dangerous projectile in a crash.

First Aid

An ophthalmologist, primary care doctor, school nurse or children’s health service should examine the eye as soon as possible, even if the injury seems minor at first, as a serious injury is not always immediately obvious. Delaying medical attention can cause the damaged areas to worsen and could result in permanent vision loss or blindness. While seeking medical help, care for the child as follows:
• DO NOT touch, rub or apply pressure to the eye.
• DO NOT try to remove any object stuck in the eye. For small debris, lift eye lid and ask child to blink rapidly to see if tears will flush out the particle. If not, close the eye and seek treatment.
• Do not apply ointment or medication to the eye.
• A cut or puncture wound should be gently covered.
• Only in the event of chemical exposure, flush with plenty of water.¹

¹Source: [https://www.aao.org/eye-health/tips-prevention/injuries-children](https://www.aao.org/eye-health/tips-prevention/injuries-children)