

When it comes to your child's vision, what could be more important?

Many parents are not aware that children need to have their eyes tested at a young age. Almost all the children who have serious vision problems do not have any symptoms and were not complaining of blurred vision. This is particularly true if only one eye is poor. There is no way for a parent to tell if there is a problem. Parents of these children are quite upset when they realize that the problem had gone undetected by them. If there is a problem with one or both eyes, amblyopia (lazy eye) almost always develops. This condition needs to be caught and treated at a very young age or else irreversible vision loss occurs. Sometimes an eye exam at age 5 or up is too late to gain full vision back. Please take your children in at age 6 months for a basic exam to check gross eye health and then again at age three for a complete eye examination. Children do need to be checked yearly from age three and up as the eyes are growing quite fast and the eye exam results can be much different one year later. You do not need a referral and all child eye examinations are covered by BC medical. Most clinics waive the surcharge so there is no cost to parents to bring their kids in.

Some facts:

- One in five children has a vision disorder. Not knowing any different, many of these children accept poor vision and other eye ailments as normal. If left unchecked, serious long-term effects can result.
- Over 80 percent of a child's learning is based on vision. If vision problems remain untreated, kids who are packed with potential are left lagging behind in learning. Some children with poor eyesight are mistakenly labeled learning-disabled. In fact, one out of six children diagnosed with a learning disability actually has a correctable vision problem.
- If detected, these conditions can be corrected by an Optometrist. Optometrists often prescribe corrective lenses or vision therapy; enabling young children to rapidly catch up to their preschool pals.
- Taking your child to an Optometrist for a comprehensive eye exam is one of the most important things you can do for your child's health.
- An Optometrist can complete this test even if your child doesn't know their ABC's. They can use shapes, animals and other child friendly ways to evaluate vision and eye health. Even shy or non-verbal children can be examined.
- Vision screenings offered by family doctors are limited in evaluating a child's overall eye health. Many serious eye conditions don't have obvious symptoms. A thorough exam by an optometrist is the *only* way to know for sure.
- Children should be examined at 6 months and at age three, before they enter kindergarten and yearly after that.
- Nearsightedness, farsightedness and astigmatism are the most common vision conditions among children. The treatment of lazy eye and crossed eyes in a child's early years is critical, as these conditions become more difficult – and sometimes impossible to correct as the child ages.



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