



YOUR CHILD'S FIRST EYE EXAMS

Every parent wants their child to be happy and healthy, and part of that is ensuring their visual system functions properly.

INFANTS

At birth, your baby can see blurred patterns of light and dark. During their first four months, your child's vision becomes clearer, colour vision begins to develop, and their two eyes start to work together. By the time they are six months old, your baby will acquire eye movement control and develop eye-hand coordination skills.

Optometrists recommend that babies have their first eye examination between six and nine months of age to ensure their eyes are healthy, eye and muscle movements and alignment are developing properly, and the eyes are focusing together. A number of serious eye conditions exist that can be identified during the first eye exam. If left uncorrected, these conditions can result in serious vision problems.

Crossed eyes, or strabismus, usually starts in infancy and needs to be treated with eyeglasses, contact lenses, prisms and/or vision therapy as early as possible. If left untreated, the ignored eye will become unable to function normally and may result in the development of amblyopia (lazy eye). If detected and treated at an early age, amblyopia will often resolve completely.

It is important to treat amblyopia early with vision therapy, eyeglasses, contact lenses, eye drops and/or patching as treatment becomes difficult later on.

TODDLERS & PRESCHOOLERS

Visual development continues into the preschool years — depth perception, eye-hand coordination and visualization skills. Your child cannot describe how they're seeing because they have no point of comparison. The best way to ensure proper visual development is for your child to have regular eye exams. Optometrists recommend children have at least one eye exam between the ages of two and five, and yearly after starting school.

TREATMENT

Be alert for symptoms that could indicate your child has a visual problem, including:

- Red, itchy or watering eyes
- Sensitivity to light
- An eye that turns in or out
- Squinting, rubbing the eyes, or excessive blinking
- A lack of concentration
- Covering or closing one eye
- Holding objects very close to the face
- Avoiding books and television
- Visible frustration or grimacing
- Tilting the head or unusual posture

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