

Back to School Eye Examinations



An Independent Licensee of the Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association

Even though summer is still in full swing, we all know that school is just around the corner. And because it will be here before we know it, this is the time to schedule your child's eye examination. Children should have their first eye examinations sometime during the first year of their lives. If you or your pediatrician decides that your child's eyes should be examined further, make an appointment with a qualified optometrist or ophthalmologist. Thereafter, your child's next comprehensive eye examination should be at the age of three, once again by age five and thereafter at least every two years. In-school screenings are used to help detect any severe vision problems early, but your child should still see an eye doctor if there are any symptoms or if he or she fails the school-administered screening test.

It is especially important to make sure that your child's vision is properly maintained because approximately 80% of everything a child learns is acquired through his or her visual system. According to the American Optometric Association, 16% of all children suffer from inadequate visual skills and up to 94% of children with reading problems have reduced visual skills. Furthermore, the Vision Council of America reports that 25% of school-age children have undiagnosed vision problems that can lead to difficulty in learning.

What many people do not realize is that there are three key aspects of the eyes that need to function correctly in order for vision to have a positive, rather than a negative, impact on a child's learning experience:

- The state of the eyes (general eye health, clearness of vision and refractive errors such as nearsightedness, farsightedness and astigmatism)
- The functioning of the eyes (ability to focus, the eyes working in tandem and eye movement)
- Visual perception (the ability to identify, understand and judge what is being seen)

Although your vision care provider knows what to look for during your child's eye examination, as a parent it is wise to have as much information as possible on the subject so that you can be a strong advocate, especially if you believe your child may suffer from some level of visual impairment.

Additional information on children's vision can be found on such sites as www.checkyearly.com (Vision Council of America), www.allaboutvision.com and www.childrensvision.com, as well as others. Of course, your pediatrician and your eye care professional are also excellent sources of information, as well.

