

A parent's guide
to good vision

**Give your child all
the clues they need
to good vision**



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Children often assume that how they see is normal. Parents can learn to recognise the signs of a vision problem and help their children to look after their eyes.

Along with allergies and asthma, eye disorders are the most common long-term health problems experienced by children. One in 10 Australian children suffers from a long-term eye disorder*.

Good vision is important for your child's educational, physical and social development and to help them reach their full learning potential.

Through regular eye examinations and by following some simple guidelines you can help your child to achieve the best possible vision and prevent conditions that can lead to permanent vision impairment.

Possible vision problems in school-aged children

The most common vision problems experienced by school-aged children are those affecting the ability to see clearly and sharply.

These problems include:

- Short-sightedness (blurred distance vision),
- Long-sightedness (difficulty focusing up close) and
- Astigmatism (distortion of vision).

Once recognised, these problems are usually easy to correct.

Other vision problems may be more difficult to detect, such as a turned or lazy eye, and require treatment by an optometrist. Early detection is the key.

*Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2008. Eye health among children. Cat. No. PHE 105. Canberra:AIHW.

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When should my child's eyes be tested?

Optometrists Association Australia recommends that children have a full eye examination with an optometrist before starting school and regularly as they progress through primary and secondary school.

A thorough eye examination with an optometrist takes approximately 25 minutes and attracts a Medicare rebate. No referral is required.

Signs that could indicate a possible vision problem

- One eye turns in or out while the other points straight ahead
- Frequent blinking
- Red or watery eyes
- Frequently rubbing the eyes
- Sensitivity to light
- Tilted head noticeably
- Poor hand-eye coordination
- Covering or closing one eye
- Difficulty learning to read
- Holding a book very close to read
- Leaving out or confusing words when reading
- Squinting or sitting very close when watching television
- Difficulty recognising familiar people in the distance
- Complaints of headaches
- Complaints of blurred or double vision



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Hints for reading

- Read in a room with good and even lighting
- Encourage regular breaks

Hints on avoiding UV damage

- The sun's effects are strongest between 10am and 3pm - use sensible sun protection measures between those times to reduce UV exposure
- Sunglasses will reduce the amount of UV reaching a child's eyes
- A broad-brimmed hat will reduce the amount of UV reaching a child's eyes by up to half



Hints for computer and television use

- Have even room lighting and avoid sitting in a completely dark room
- Minimise glare or reflections from the lights or windows
- Limit computer sessions to less than two hours
- Have the top of the monitor/television approximately at or slightly below eye level
- Ensure children take regular breaks from the screen
- For video games, encourage children to sit as far back as the leads allow



Hints on healthy living

- Include plenty of vegetables, fruits, nuts and fish containing vital antioxidants
- Encourage regular outdoor activity to help reduce the risk and severity of myopia



There are also other eye problems and diseases that have no obvious symptoms. Remember vision is a precious sense. Children need to have regular eye examinations.

To find the location of your nearest optometrist or for further information visit

www.optometrists.asn.au/childrensvision



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