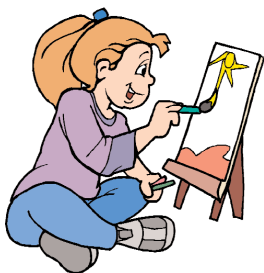




Regular eye examinations are really important for your child, even if you don't think he or she has any problems. For example, some squints (a condition in which the two eyes do not look at the same point) are hard to detect without specialist examination. Most visual loss can be prevented simply by providing spectacles or some other kind of treatment such as patching the good eye. The earlier eye problems are picked up, the better the outcome will be.

WHAT YOU CAN DO:

- Take your child for regular eye examinations by an optometrist (ophthalmic optician). Children do not have to be able to read to have their eyes examined. Optometrists can use picture charts instead of letter charts to check your child's vision, and tell whether they need spectacles by simply shining a light into their eye. This is particularly important if there is a history of squints or lazy eyes in your family.



- In most cases you don't have to pay for your child's eye examination, as the NHS pays for this under the General Ophthalmic Services (GOS).
- Ask your family or friends which optometrist they would recommend. Look in the Yellow Pages (under Opticians – Ophthalmic). Telephone NHS direct (0845 4647). Look on www.nhs.uk
- The NHS voucher scheme contributes to the cost of children's spectacles regardless of your income.
- If you are worried about your children's eye sight, take them to an optometrist who displays this logo in the practice window.



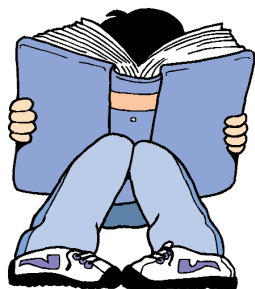
REMEMBER – MOST CHILDREN HAVE EXCELLENT SIGHT AND DON'T NEED ANY SPECTACLES OR TREATMENT. TAKE YOUR CHILD FOR REGULAR EYE EXAMINATIONS TO MAKE SURE.



Your Child's Eye Care

A Guide for Parents and Carers

Regular eye care is important for all children and it is not difficult for you to look after your child's eyes.

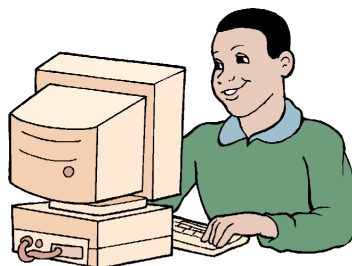


SOME FACTS YOU MIGHT NOT KNOW ABOUT CHILDREN'S VISION:

- Children are born with poor vision in both eyes and they need a clear focussed image in both eyes if their sight is to develop normally.
- If the child needs spectacles or has a squint (when the eyes are not lined up together) and this is not treated before the age of 7 to 8 the child may have permanently reduced vision (amblyopia). The sooner the child is treated, the better the prospects are for normal vision.
- About 2-3% of all children have a "lazy eye", or amblyopia. In under 20-year-olds, the incidence of amblyopia (lazy eye) is ten times more frequent than all other diseases and trauma put together.
- The incidence of myopia or short-sightedness is increasing and although a previous eye examination may have concluded that your child did not need spectacles, this situation can change.

COMMON 'MYTHS'

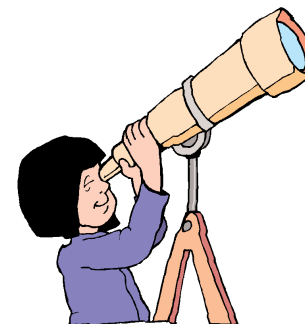
- **Wearing glasses will make your eyes worse.**
There is little evidence to back up this assumption. Wearing spectacles simply helps you to see clearly and comfortably. If a child needs spectacles when young (under 7 to 8 years), not wearing them may do them permanent harm as they may develop a lazy eye.
- **Children's glasses have to be 'NHS'.**
NHS spectacles now do not exist and the NHS instead pays a contribution towards the cost of any spectacles. Some opticians do spectacles for the NHS voucher value, so you do not have to pay anything for these.
- **My child can see, so I know she/he is all right.**
Children may not notice that they have vision that is worse in one eye than the other and even if they do notice, they may assume it is normal. After all they can write better with one hand than the other, so it is not unreasonable for them to assume that they should be able to see better with one eye than the other.



It is particularly important for you to have your child's eyes examined if:

- Your child has special needs, as these children are particularly prone to eye problems

- There is a history of a squint or lazy eye in your child's family
- If people in the family needed spectacles when they were young



Don't expect your child to tell you if she/he has a problem. Children assume that the way they see is normal as they have not known any different. Older children may be reluctant to admit that they can't see.

SIGNS TO LOOK OUT FOR:

- One eye turns in or out, this may be more noticeable when tired
- Frequent rubbing of the eyes
- Watery eyes
- Clumsiness
- Avoidance of reading, writing or drawing
- Screwing up eyes or frowning when reading or watching TV
- Behavioural or concentration problems at school
- Progress at school not as expected
- Complaints of blurred or double vision, or unexplained headaches