

Eyes Right! Your Child's Vision



What is more beautiful than your child's bright eyes? How well he sees with those eyes is important to his learning and development. Parents and teachers need to be aware that a child might not know if his vision is normal.

Arrange for regular vision screenings.

Newborns are checked for general eye health in the hospital nursery and at well-baby visits. Illinois requires yearly vision screening for all preschool children 3 years of age or older in any public or private preschool program or licensed child care center. If screening finds a problem, the child should see an eye doctor. Before they enter kindergarten, children need a complete vision exam and an *eye alignment* evaluation by an eye doctor.

Be aware of risk factors.

A child may need more frequent eye exams if she was premature or has developmental delays. Other risk factors include an eye injury, other illnesses, or a family history of eye disease.

Learn the signs of possible eye and vision problems.

Parents should talk to their health care provider if their infant's eyes—

- Always turn in or out, or they don't appear straight in photographs
- Don't appear to move together normally by age 3 months
- Appear very different from each other
- Don't focus on a parent's face by 3 months, or on toys held in front of him by 6 months
- Have pupils that are NOT black, round, and in the center of each eye

Parents should talk to their health care provider if their preschooler—

- Squints, rubs her eyes, or frequently has teary eyes
- Sits too close to the television or holds a book too close
- Tilts her head or closes one eye to see better
- Is more sensitive to light than her peers
- Avoids activities that require near vision, such as looking at a book, or activities that require distance vision, such as catching a ball
- Complains frequently of headaches or tired eyes

How can I find an eye doctor?

Do you think your child has an eye problem? If so, ask his regular health care provider for a referral to an eye doctor for a full exam. Catching eye problems early can prevent later difficulties. Many county health departments offer eye tests for children over 3 years old. For general information, contact the Illinois Department of Public Health's Vision and Hearing Program at 217-524-2396 (voice) or 800-547-0466 (TTY).

If your child needs eyeglasses, let her help pick out the frames. Explain how wearing them will help her see words in a book better or recognize her friends across the playground.

The opinions, resources, and referrals provided in this Tip Sheet are intended for information purposes only and should not be considered or used as a substitute for medical advice, diagnosis, or treatment. We advise parents to seek the advice of a physician or other qualified health care provider with questions regarding their child's health or medical conditions.

Any opinions, findings, conclusions, or recommendations expressed in this tip sheet are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Illinois State Board of Education.



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