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PARENT HEALTH BULLETIN

SEPTEMBER 2011

THIS MONTH'S TOPIC: YOUR CHILD'S EYES

As the school year starts, you probably remembered doctor's visits for check-ups and maybe even a dental exam for your child. Did you make sure your child got her eyes checked? Not being able to see clearly is a big distraction for children and can cause headaches. Perhaps a teacher has told you that he has noticed your child straining her eyes. If your child complains of headaches or you hear from a teacher that your child is having trouble seeing the front of the room, go ahead and schedule an eye exam.

If your child already wears glasses or uses contact lenses, make sure you visit the doctor on a regular basis to update any vision changes. Usually your child should have an eye exam yearly.

5 signs that may signify that your child should see an eye doctor

1. Sitting too close to the TV
2. Having a difficult time reading
3. Squinting or straining his eyes
4. Having trouble reading the blackboard
5. Having trouble seeing objects at a distance

Tips for kids that need glasses

- Allow your child to pick out his own frames.



- If you have a young child that needs glasses, plastic frames are best.
- If your child is a bit older and selects metal frames, double check that they have spring hinges. (They are less likely to break.)

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- If your child is very active you may want to consider a strap to hold the glasses in place.
- You may have the option to buy polycarbonate lenses. These are recommended for kids because they are light and thin and almost unbreakable. The one downside is that they will scratch.
- If your child is asking to get contact lenses keep in mind that problems with contacts are usually because of bad habits or not taking care of the lenses themselves. Talk to your child about the responsibility of having contact lenses.

What to expect at an eye exam

When taking your child to the eye doctor, remember it can be a frightening experience, especially if this is the first time. Some of the instruments that are used are very big and can be frightening. Talk to your child about what to expect at the eye exam.

During the exam itself the doctor will check for any eye problems such as nearsightedness or farsightedness. She will also check the eye for reaction to light eye movement and any general eye problems.

Nearsighted — You or your child can see things up close and have trouble seeing things that are far away, like a street sign.

Farsighted — You or your child can see far away but has trouble seeing things close to him or her, such as a book.

Test your Knowledge

- **True or False: Eating carrots will improve your eyesight.**
True. Carrots have vitamin A, which is very important for eyesight. You may have even told your child that he should eat carrots to help see better. There are other fruits and vegetables that have vitamin A, such as asparagus and nectarines. If your child eats



a well-balanced diet he should have all the vitamin A needed for good eyesight.

- **True or False: Sitting too close to the TV will ruin your eyes.**

False. There is no research to show that if your child sits close to the TV he will ruin his eyes. In fact, children can focus on the TV screen easier than adults can when they are that close. If your child repeatedly sits very close to the TV it could mean that she is having a hard time seeing and that you should check to see if she needs an eye exam.

- **True or False: Wearing glasses too much can make your eyes dependent on them.**

False. Wearing glasses does not make the eyes get worse. However, over time the problems with the eyes may change due to genetics. These changes may require you or your child to need a different glasses prescription.

REFERENCES:

- American Academy of Family Physicians. Glasses and Contact Lenses. December 2007
- KidsHealth.org Vision Facts and Myths. August 2010
- WebMD. Your Child's Eye Exam. Sept. 2009

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