

LOOKING AFTER YOUR CHILD'S EYES

What you need to know



When should I take my child for their first eye test? How much will my child's eye test cost? How often should my child have their eyes examined? Find out all you need to know about your child's eyecare.



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WHEN SHOULD I TAKE MY CHILD FOR THEIR FIRST EYE TEST?

Take your child to get their eyes checked as a toddler, before they start school, as the treatment for certain eye conditions works better if any issues are discovered early on.

If you have been told that your child is too young, that you should only get their eyes tested if they have a problem, or they have to be able to read to have an eye test, read on so your child doesn't miss out on a vital health check.



Opticians can look after the eyes of children, toddlers and even babies. Often, the sooner an eye problem is detected, the better. So if you have any concerns about your child's eyes, the first step is to speak to your local optician. If you don't already attend an optical practice yourself, ask friends for recommendations. Some practices specialise in eye care for small children, while others are well set up for children with special needs so there is no need for any child to miss out on eye care.

The following are things to look out for to ensure your child doesn't miss out on a vital health check. Does your child:

- Screw up or rub their eyes
- Act clumsily or bump into things
- Need to sit close to the TV or hold a page they're reading close to their nose
- Refuse to read or have difficulties concentrating
- Complain that text on a page does not stay in a straight line, but slopes
- Seem to be introverted or a "day-dreamer"
- Act in a disruptive way or have a short attention span
- Use long-term medication. There are a number of different medications which may negatively impact healthy sight, e.g. steroids, ADHD drugs, anti-bedwetting drugs, antihistamines, anti-depressants
- Complain of headaches. Most headaches are not eye-related, however there are some eye problems that can cause headaches
- Close one eye when out in bright sunshine

HOW MUCH DOES AN EYE TEST COST FOR MY CHILD?

If you're concerned about the cost of an eye test for your child, don't worry! Children younger than 16, as well as those aged 16 to 18 in full time education get the cost of their eye test covered by the NHS. Children in these groups will also get a voucher towards the cost of a pair of specs.

HOW OFTEN SHOULD MY CHILD HAVE THEIR EYES EXAMINED?

Once your child has had their eyes checked, the optician will let you know how often they need to visit. For many people, every two years is fine, but they may suggest your child visits every six months or every year, depending on their particular needs.

DO YOU KNOW WHO IS THE BEST PERSON TO HELP YOU GET SPECTACLES FOR YOUR CHILD?

A dispensing optician (DO) is trained to help you choose a frame that fits well, as well as one that appeals to your child. Ask them to select a number of frames that will fit your child's face and prescription: this will give you plenty of styles to select from. Allow time to browse and choose with your child.

Beyond frames, there are different types of lenses available, and a DO can guide you through these choices. Some children will benefit from thinner lenses, while others may need stronger lenses and frames that are well designed for playing sports.

The DO can also discuss the option of contact lenses which may appeal to older children and those who enjoy sport. Ask your local optical practice if you can speak to a DO when you next need eye care advice or specs for your child.



Children can have their eyes tested at any age



Children up to age 18 and in full time education are entitled to an NHS eye exam

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Your child doesn't have to be able to read to have an eye test

Get your child's eyes checked well before they start school



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WELL FITTED SPECS

Every child deserves to have specs that fit well: specs that slip don't do their job as your child won't be looking through the centre of the lenses. What's more, if your child's specs aren't comfortable, they won't want to wear them.

WHAT DO YOU DO IF YOU THINK THAT YOUR CHILD'S SPECS DON'T FIT?

Start by going back to the practice where you got them. Ask to see the dispensing optician: they are specially trained to fit specs and will be able to adjust the frames for the best fit. Don't be embarrassed to go back more than once: some children need their specs adjusting every few months as they get out of shape with the rough and tumble of everyday life.

KEEP COMING BACK TO YOUR OPTICIAN

Because your child's eyes are developing it is essential that their specs fit well and are up to date. Opticians offer on-going aftercare for your child's specs, to ensure that the specs are always correctly fitted and help with repairs or replacements if needed until the prescription expires.

Talk to your registered dispensing optician for more advice.



MAKING EYECARE
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EYECARE FAQ - AN INITIATIVE BY ABDO

Association of British Dispensing Opticians