



FOCUS



Dr. Bruce Butts
Edmonton, Alberta

Fall 2010

Back-to-school time

After a summer of sleeping in or doing fun things, the alarm bell announcing that first day of school can be a rude awakening. Dread it or love it, your children are heading back to class. The first day can be crazy. Lockers won't open. Where's the washroom? Help!

You can't be with your kids every moment, but you can send them back with healthy eyes and clear vision.

Since 80% of all learning is visual, eye problems will create barriers to learning. Unfortunately, it's easy to miss the subtle signs that your child is suffering from focus problems, nearsightedness, or "lazy eye," where both eyes don't work well together. And there could be other issues detected only through an eye exam.

Isn't an eye test enough?

An informal eye test, such as asking a child to read from a distance, is not enough to test for the full range of potential eye disorders. Even if your child passed a vision screening, that score only means that 'Brianna or Brook' can see an object at a specified distance. That score does not relate to any other vision skills needed for learning. Plus, that score doesn't guarantee your child's eyes are healthy.

For instance, a mild misalignment,

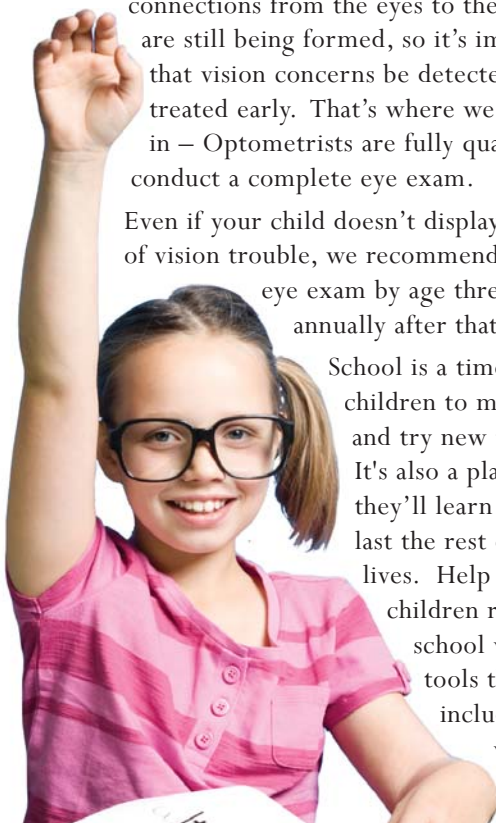
while not evident to the untrained eye, can cause eyestrain, headaches, and even a dislike of reading. Not only do eye problems hinder learning, but some problems can lead to blindness if untreated in the first few years of life.

Let us help

The Canadian Association of Optometrists recommends that all children have a complete eye exam by age three. No time is too soon. Until the age of eight, the connections from the eyes to the brain are still being formed, so it's important that vision concerns be detected and treated early. That's where we come in – Optometrists are fully qualified to conduct a complete eye exam.

Even if your child doesn't display any signs of vision trouble, we recommend a complete eye exam by age three and annually after that.

School is a time for your children to make friends and try new things. It's also a place where they'll learn skills that last the rest of their lives. Help your children return to school with all the tools they need, including good vision. ▢



Your Doctor Recommends™

Dr. Bruce Butts



Q. My daughter is scheduled for her first eye exam, but she's nervous.

How can I reassure her?

A. The onset of the school year brings in many young children for the first time. You can ease your child's anxiety by explaining they won't receive any shots or painful procedures. Mostly, they'll need to answer questions the best they can.

Explain they may need to sit very still for a few minutes while an eye computer checks their eyes. The doctor will briefly shine some bright lights in their eyes, and will ask them to read very small letters on a wall.

If they do need glasses, tell them there are all types of cool ones and they can help pick out the colours and shapes they like. Be encouraging: "Just think how much you'll enjoy watching your favourite movies."

We'll make their first eye exam a fun and positive experience, to maintain a lifetime of healthy sight. ▢

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Parents, do you know your

See well, do well

Good vision requires many different skills. Those skills must work together to help your children not only see clearly but understand what they see.

Your children's sight is an important factor in their success and their happy experiences at school. Do your children have the vision skills they need to see well and do well?

» Distance Vision

The skill to see clearly and comfortably at three metres or more.

» Near Vision

The skill to see at 33-40 cm, the distance they perform school desk work.

» Peripheral Awareness

The skill to be aware of objects or movement to the side while they look straight ahead.

» Binocular Coordination

The skill to use both eyes together.

» Eye Movement Skills

The skill to aim their eyes and move them smoothly across a page, quickly and accurately from one object to another.

» Eye/Hand Coordination

The skill to use their eyes and hands together.

If any of these vision skills are missing or not functioning properly, your child's eyes must work harder. This can lead to blurred vision, headaches, fatigue and other eyestrain symptoms.



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"eye ABCs"?

Be alert to problems

It's up to you – parents and caregivers – to watch for symptoms that may indicate a vision problem, especially if Junior frequently:

- loses his place while reading
- avoids close work
- rubs his eyes or complains of headaches
- holds reading material closer than normal
- turns or tilts his head to use one eye only
- shuts one eye when reading
- omits or confuses small words when reading
- uses a finger to keep his place while reading
- performs below his potential

Even if you don't notice any symptoms, a change in vision can occur without you or your child realizing it. Have your child's eyes examined every year.

What to expect

A thorough eye exam includes a review of your child's health and vision history.

Our trained and caring professionals will test for nearsightedness, farsightedness, astigmatism, colour perception, lazy eye, crossed-eyes, eye coordination, depth perception and focusing ability. As well, we assess your child's overall eye health to ensure a lifetime of good vision.

While an apple a day plays a healthy part, make sure your child's vision is ready for school each year. Call us today to schedule a complete eye exam for all your children. ▢

Did you know?

- » About 80 percent of babies are born far-sighted? Roughly five percent are born near-sighted, unable to see objects at a distance clearly.
- » Nearsightedness usually occurs before age 25? Many school-age children and teens first discover they are nearsighted when they have difficulty reading the writing on the board at school.
- » A 20/20 score on a vision test isn't enough? Don't assume your children have good vision because they pass a school vision screening. A vision test doesn't measure any of the other vision skills needed for learning.
- » The Canadian Association of Optometrists recommends that children have their first eye exam by six months of age?





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Women more at risk for eye disease

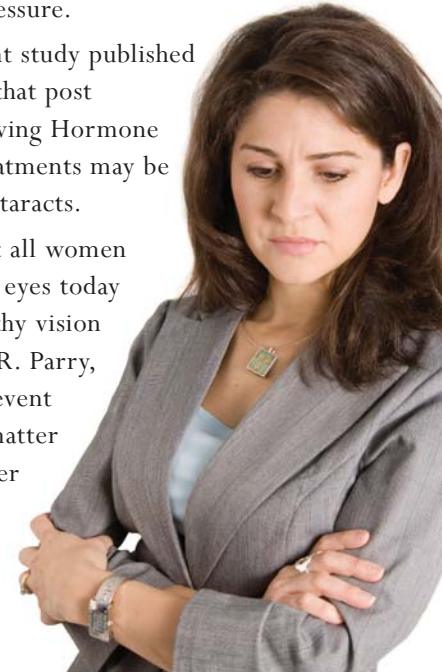
Every year, more women than men are diagnosed with eye diseases such as glaucoma, cataracts, macular degeneration and diabetic retinopathy.

Some vision changes in pregnant women, such as blurred vision and seeing spots, may be a sign of diabetes or high blood pressure.

For older women, a recent study published in *Ophthalmology* showed that post menopausal women receiving Hormone Replacement Therapy treatments may be at an increased risk for cataracts.

“The message is clear that all women need to take care of their eyes today in order to maintain healthy vision in the future,” said Hugh R. Parry, president and CEO of Prevent Blindness America. “No matter what age you are, it’s never too early to start visiting your eye doctor and scheduling regular eye exams.” ▢

From preventblindness.org



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