

Why Do Kids Need Routine Eye Exams?

Submitted by Hattiesburg Eye Clinic Pediatric Services

Our children grow up quickly! Their bodies grow rapidly from infancy to adolescence, and this is especially true of their eyes. When a child's vision does not develop properly, eye problems arise that affect sight and overall ocular health. If not diagnosed and treated early, these issues could compromise future vision as well as intellectual, emotional, and social development.

Children's vision begins to develop rapidly soon after they are born. While at first, they only focus on things at close range with high contrast colors (white, black, or red), their vision quickly sharpens throughout their first year.

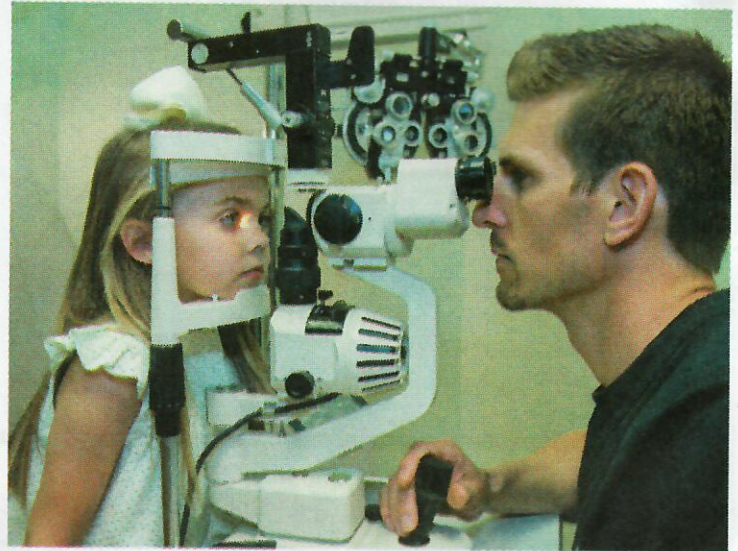
During the first year of life, problems could begin to show. Along with the American Optometric Association, we recommend the following schedule for your child's vision exams:

- First visit: Six to 12 months;
- Second visit: Three years of age;
- Third visit: Just before entering school;
- Subsequent visits: Every two years.

If children have higher risk factors for vision impairment, like low birth weight or a family history of eye disease, or they have been diagnosed with a vision problem, they may need additional testing and more frequent eye exams — such as once a year after starting school.

While the recommended visit schedule is a good guideline, you do not have to wait to see us if you notice anything out of the ordinary with your child's vision. Keep an eye out if your child develops any of the following symptoms:

- Squints or rubs eyes
- Is sensitive to light
- Has a sudden drop in grades or difficulty copying from the board



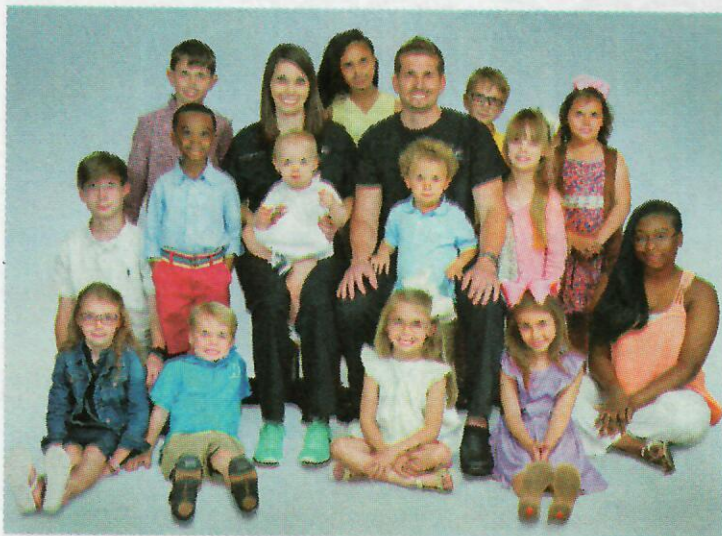
- Avoids reading or uses a finger to follow while reading
- Seems confused over left and right or has other poor directional skills
- Demonstrates poor hand-eye coordination
- Sits too close to a viewing screen
- Tilts his or her head to see better
- Experiences chronic headaches or excessive eye tearing

These abnormal signs all could indicate a potential vision problem. If you notice any of these problems, do not hesitate to call us for an appointment.

For optimum ocular health, it is important your child undergo a full exam that far exceeds the capabilities of a screening. An exam not only evaluates eye health, it also measures how effective the eyes and the entire ocular system are working. This includes eye teaming (coordinating together to produce binocular vision) and tracking, near vision, focusing, and eye-hand coordination.

Screenings have their place, but you should not rely on them solely to diagnose your child's full range of eye health.

Hattiesburg Eye Clinic's doctors can make a difference in your child's vision and eye health. Dr. Anna Patterson and Dr. Scott Paladichuk have the training and experience to accurately diagnose and treat each child whether the condition is mild visual impairment or an ocular disease. Using the latest diagnostic technology and treatment techniques, our team is committed to helping children see clearly. To learn more or request an appointment, call 601-268-5910 and ask about our pediatric vision exams and services.



Photos courtesy of Hattiesburg Eye Clinic