

Protecting your child's eyes from the sun

Children's eyes need to be protected from the sun's harmful rays.

You can keep your child safe by making sure they wear sunglasses which have protection – look for sunglasses that have full UVA protection or ask your for advice at your local opticians.



Are your child's eyes at risk?



Everything you need to know about looking after your child's vision and free eye examinations on the NHS

Published in April 2009 by NHS Surrey and the Surrey Local Optical Committee

When children are young good eye care is essential as it can help prevent problems later on. It's particularly important in the first few years of a child's life because this is when their eyesight will develop the most.

Simple steps like making sure a child's eyes are tested regularly from a young age can help detect problems early and prevent complications later on.

A recent survey of school-aged children found that one in five had a sight problem that had gone unnoticed. Any problems affecting a child's eyesight can affect their education and development – so the sooner a problem is detected and treatment is started, the better.



Why is good eye care important for young children?

Although the vision of an 18 month old baby can be as developed as the vision of an adult, the baby will develop many more visual skills over the next three years of their life. This means something as simple as poor focus in one eye could do permanent damage to a child's sight.

In fact, squints and lazy eyes are much more likely to appear between the ages of two and three years. Eye problems such as these will stay with a child for the rest of their life, which is why regular eye checks are so important in helping to detect any problems early on.

When should I get my child's eyes tested?

Children should have an eye examination before they start school.

However, if there is a family history of astigmatism, squints, lazy eyes or long-sightedness they should see someone even earlier, ideally before they are two years old.

What does an eye examination involve?

An optician (also known as an optometrist) will ask your child to complete a number of simple tests so they can check the health of your child's eyes and their eye co-ordination. Vision and focussing are checked in several ways - for example, some of these tests will involve matching shapes or letters.

What if the optician detects an eye problem?

The sooner eye problems are detected the better because it means we can start treating them. Treatments will vary depending on the problem but could include your child needing to wear glasses or a patch, or do exercises that will help to improve their vision. In some cases children will need to be referred to a specialist eye clinic.

Can I get any financial help?

Eye examinations for children are free on the NHS so you won't need to pay for them.

Children are also eligible for NHS Vouchers which will help with the cost of glasses, should your child need them.

