



School-Age Children

A good education for your child means good schools, good teachers and good vision. Your child's eyes are constantly in use in the classroom and at play. So when his or her vision is not functioning properly, learning and participation in recreational activities will suffer.

The basic vision skills needed for school use are:

- Near vision. The ability to see clearly and comfortably at 10-13 inches.
- Distance vision. The ability to see clearly and comfortably beyond arm's reach.
- Binocular coordination. The ability to use both eyes together.
- Eye movement skills. The ability to aim the eyes accurately, move them smoothly across a page and shift them quickly and accurately from one object to another.
- Focusing skills. The ability to keep both eyes accurately focused at the proper distance to see clearly and to change focus quickly.
- Peripheral awareness. The ability to be aware of things located to the side while looking straight ahead.
- Eye/hand coordination. The ability to use the eyes and hands together.

If any of these or other vision skills are lacking or not functioning properly, your child will have to work harder. This can lead to headaches, fatigue and other eyestrain problems. As a parent, be alert for symptoms that may indicate your child has a vision or visual processing problem. Be sure to tell your optometrist if your child frequently:

- Loses their place while reading;
- Avoids close work;
- Holds reading material closer than normal;
- Tends to rub his or her eyes;
- Has headaches;
- Turns or tilts head to use one eye only;
- Makes frequent reversals when reading or writing;
- Uses finger to maintain place when reading;
- Omits or confuses small words when reading;
- Consistently performs below potential.

Because vision changes can occur without you or your child noticing them, your child should visit the optometrist at least every two years, or more frequently, if specific problems or risk factors exist. If needed, the doctor can prescribe treatment including eyeglasses, contact lenses or vision therapy.

Remember, a school vision or pediatrician's screening is not a substitute for a thorough eye examination.