



Children's EYE AND VISION CARE: AN ESSENTIAL HEALTH BENEFIT



EYE HEALTH CARE IS ESSENTIAL AND NOW IT'S COVERED

Studies from the past two decades reveal that there exists a public health emergency with respect to children's vision health in the United States.¹ While most childhood vision problems can be prevented through early detection, follow-up and treatment, millions of children are not receiving comprehensive eye examinations necessary for early detection of the most significant vision problems. The limited screenings, which many children receive at school or at their pediatricians' office, check only for far vision difficulties and are not a substitute for a comprehensive eye examination performed by an eye doctor (optometrist or ophthalmologist).

Although it is important that children see the whiteboard, it is equally important that their eyes are healthy and that their vision is clear. Additionally, maintaining focus and eye alignment is critical to reading comprehension. A comprehensive eye examination can help prevent school and social achievement problems by detecting near eye focusing and alignment difficulties, eye diseases, life-threatening conditions, and developmental delays with the highest level of accuracy.²

The Affordable Care Act of 2010 (ACA) provides children with health insurance coverage that includes direct access to their local eye doctor for a comprehensive eye examination, follow-up care, treatment, and, if needed, eyeglasses or contact lenses. Comprehensive pediatric vision is one of 10 essential benefits authorized by the ACA as a required benefit for all health plans sold in the new state-based health insurance marketplaces (exchanges) and many plans outside the marketplaces.

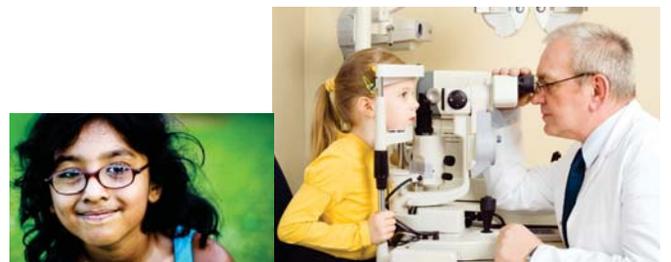
Early and annual comprehensive eye examinations contribute to healthy development and a child's success in school and later in life. For the first time, the federal government is recognizing eye health care from birth through age 18 as essential and is linking both medical eye care and vision care together under the same plan.

¹Institute of Medicine, 2003.

²Abt Associates, Inc. Building a Comprehensive Child Vision Care System. A report of the National Commission on Vision and Health, June 2009.

Starting in 2014, children's eye and vision coverage is essential:

All new and state exchange-based health plans must cover an annual comprehensive eye exam and treatment, including eyeglasses, from birth through at least age 18. (Coverage is not annual in HI and MA).



To schedule an appointment with a local Doctor of Optometry for your child's comprehensive eye exam, contact the American Optometric Association at 1-800-365-2219 or click on the "Find a Doctor" at www.aoa.org.

ACCESS to CARE

Healthy eyes and vision are important to a child's ability to succeed in school and later in life. Eighty percent of learning occurs through the eyes. Undetected and untreated eye and vision disorders, such as uncorrected refractive errors (hyperopia and astigmatism), amblyopia (lazy eye) and strabismus, can result in delayed reading and poorer performance in school.

A comprehensive eye examination is not a screening. A screening is a limited process that does not assure that a child will receive follow-up care and treatment. A comprehensive eye exam:

- Is performed by an optometrist or ophthalmologist and includes obtaining the medical history of each patient.
- Includes an internal examination to observe the inner parts of the eye such as the retina and optic nerve.
- Measures visual performance at several distances and levels.
- Tests for proper near-point focusing and alignment which impacts a student's ability to efficiently read and write.
- Assesses binocular fusion, which is the ability of the eyes to work together.
- Includes color vision testing.
- Evaluates depth perception and the eyes ability to work together to track across a page accurately while reading or copying material.
- Detects eye diseases like amblyopia (lazy eye) or strabismus.
- May detect systemic conditions that may be present like juvenile diabetes and juvenile arthritis.

Our society cannot afford to have even one child – let alone millions – slip through the cracks and never reach their full potential because of preventable and treatable vision problems.

Don't delay in scheduling your child's (birth through age 18) comprehensive eye examination. It is now an Essential Health Benefit.

This information is brought to you by the National Commission on Vision and Health (NCVH).

The National Commission on Vision and Health strives to improve the nations' visual health by collaborating with experts in science and health policy to ensure informed analysis and policy recommendations in order to prevent blindness, improve vision and eliminate vision health disparities. The Commission provides unbiased and authoritative information and advice concerning health policy to decision-makers, health professionals, and the public at large. The goal of the Commission is to integrate vision care into public health programs at the national, state and local levels. The Commission is made up of 9 members with varying expertise and backgrounds: Richard Castillo, DO, OD; Emily Hancock, Pharm.D, MPA; Edwin C. Marshall, OD, MS, MPH; Kathy M. Berman, MPH; Randolph E. Brooks, OD; George Foster, OD; Glinda Foster Hill; David Rosenstein, DMD, MPH; Kirsten Thomsen, PA.



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