

PROTECTING YOUR CHILD'S VISION

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Protecting Your Child's Vision

There are many things you can do to keep your child's eyes healthy and seeing clearly from birth through the teen years.

Here are some tips to help your baby develop healthy visual skills.

- Place toys within your baby's focus, only 20-30 cm (8-12 inches) away.
- Encourage your baby to crawl. This helps develop eye-hand coordination.
- Talk to baby as you move around the room to encourage his or her eyes to follow you.
- Hang a mobile above or outside of your baby's crib.
- Give your baby toys they can hold and look at.

Make sure your baby is following moving objects with his or her eyes and developing eye-hand coordination. If he or she seems delayed, talk to your child's doctor.

As your baby grows into an active child, continue to encourage good visual skills by providing visually stimulating toys that will improve motor and eye-hand coordination skills. Some good examples are:

- Building or linking blocks
- Puzzles
- Stringing beads
- Pegboards
- Drawing tools like pencils, chalk, crayons, and markers
- Finger paints
- Modeling clay

How can I protect my child's sight?

- Eat right both during pregnancy and after. Not only will your baby be healthier, but you will set a good example.
- Provide nutritious, well-balanced meals for your child.
- Provide your child with age-appropriate toys that are free from sharp edges.
- Give your child toys that encourage visual development.
- Provide sun protection for your child by means of shelter or UV coated lenses, especially if your child's eyes are light in color.
- Encourage your child to wear the proper protective athletic gear when playing sports.
- Get your child's eyes examined by an eye doctor regularly.

How often should children's eyes be checked?

There are no strict guidelines. However, a detailed examination by an ophthalmologist, preferably a pediatric ophthalmologist, in the first year of life and another one between the ages of three and four is recommended. Additional exams are administered if screenings at the pediatrician show any ocular misalignment or visual difficulties. Children with siblings or close relatives with significant eye problems should be examined early and repeatedly by a pediatric ophthalmologist.

What do I do in an emergency?

If your child gets something in his or her eye and you don't know what it is (or if there is alkaline in it – most household products will so indicate alkaline on the label), flush your child's eye for at least 20 minutes and have someone call for medical help or the local poison control center. Do not stop flushing your child's eye until medical help arrives unless instructed otherwise.

If your child is hit in the eye with a blunt object, examine the eye closely. If you see bleeding, or cannot open the child's eyelids or observe his or her pupils, you should seek immediate medical attention. If your child continues to be in pain, constantly rubs his or her injured eye or complains of blurry or double vision, call the doctor. In the meantime, cover your child's injured eye with a cold pack for 15 minutes every hour or so. If you are using an ice pack, wrap it in a moistened cloth so the eye does not become damaged from freezing.

If your child's eye is injured with a sharp object, cover the eye with a shield (the cutout bottom of foam cup would do) as you would above and seek immediate medical attention. DO NOT press on the eyelids. If the sharp object is still in the child's eye, DO NOT remove it. Instead, cover the eye and call 9-9-9.

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