



How can parents help?

Good vision is important for a child's educational, physical and social development

Approximately one in five Australian children suffers from an undetected vision problem, or requires ongoing assessment. To help give children the best chance of reaching their full potential, it is important for parents to recognise the possible symptoms of vision difficulties.

Many signs of vision problems are quite obvious, but others are harder to identify. Some of the more common signs include:

- > one eye turning in or out while the other points straight ahead
- > noticeable tilting or turning of the head when the child is looking at something
- > frequent blinking or rubbing of the eyes
- > red or watery eyes
- > difficulty reading, such as skipping and confusing words, and holding a book very close while reading
- > complaints of headaches and blurred or double vision
- > squinting or having difficulty recognising things or people in the distance

Creating a healthy eye environment at home is very important

These useful hints will help you achieve this:

- > Take your child to visit an optometrist on a regular basis, especially at the first signs of a suspected vision problem, because once recognised, many eye problems are easy to correct or treat.
- > When reading at home, always read in a room with good and even lighting, and encourage regular breaks.
- > Encourage your child to spend a few hours outdoors each day.
- > Encourage your child to wear sunglasses and a broad-brimmed hat while outside as this reduces the amount of UV exposure to their eyes.
- > When watching television or playing on smartphones, computers or video games, ensure the room is well lit and reduce glare and reflection from lights or windows.
- > Limit computer sessions and have short breaks from looking at a computer for at least five to 10 minutes every hour.
- > Limit television watching to less than two hours at a time, before having a break, and encourage your child to sit as far as possible from the screen.
- > Have the top of computer monitors/televisions at, or slightly below, eye level.
- > Promote healthy eating by including plenty of vegetables, fruits, nuts and fish in your child's diet. These foods contain important nutrients such as antioxidants, vitamin A and omega-3s, all helpful in maintaining eye and body health.

Optometry Australia recommends that children have a full eye examination with an optometrist before starting school and then regular visits as they progress through primary and secondary school.