

When Should I Bring My Child to The Optometrist?

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Good vision and healthy eyes are essential to learning and development. Undiagnosed eye disease or vision problems could impact a child's social interactions, educational and future employment opportunities. Currently, 1 in 4 kids in school have some sort of eye disorder which could be affecting their learning. It is estimated that around 80% of learning is visual. This makes having a comprehensive eye exam an important start to a child's learning journey.

Here are 5 signs that your child may need an eye exam or optometric evaluation:

1 - Something looks off

An obvious sign to bring your child in to see an optometrist is if you notice any physical or visible structural abnormality. These could be observed at birth, or show up later in development. These include:

- Misaligned eyes (crossed eyes or an eye turned outwards)
- Eyes that flutter or shake
- Droopy eyelids or blinking abnormalities
- Chronic tearing, redness, swelling, infection (coloured discharge)
- Squinting or closing an eye while viewing something

2 - Grades plummeting or changes in behaviour

As a child ages, school tends to become more difficult and challenging. Some red flags you want to look out for are:

- If your child starts to avoid reading
- Any postural changes during homework time (including blocking an eye, head turns or tilts and closing an eye)
- Any behavioural changes when it's time for school work or going to school.
- Eye rubbing (Some children rub their eyes when they are tired which is a common behaviour. When it is considered an abnormal behaviour is when the child is constantly rubbing their eyes)

In some cases where children are suspected to have ADD/ADHD, the child actually had an eye problem. These weren't frequent cases, but something a parent may want to have checked.

3 - Trauma

Any trauma to the eye should be examined by an optometrist. Urgent cases include sudden blacking out of the vision, flashes, floaters or any lacerations. Please contact your optometrist's clinic if you suspect your child may warrant a health check.

***BONUS: these appointments are covered for all Albertans of any age by Alberta Healthcare.

4 – That time of year again

A child between the ages of 6 months and 19 years, should see their optometrist once a year, during that time Alberta Healthcare covers all eye exams. Even as your child graduates high school and potentially heads to post-secondary, we recommend yearly check-ups. This is to help students with any visual strain or fatigue due to the rigorous studying. We also strongly recommend that all parents bring their kids in if their child is complaining of poor vision, eye discomfort or anything eye related.

5 - Kindergarten

In Alberta, the Association of Optometrists has a program called Eye See... Eye Learn. If it is determined that your child requires eyeglasses, they will receive a **free pair** through the program. The optometrist will order the glasses for you once the examination is complete. The glasses are covered by a one-year manufacturer's warranty. A child is **eligible** from September they begin kindergarten to when they begin Grade One.

If you or your family is looking for a family optometrist, let us take care of you at McCormack Optometric Centre. We are currently accepting new patients and have the best available machines to diagnose any eye problems!

