

Your Child's First Eye Exams



80% of a child's learning is visual.

Every parent wants their child to be happy and healthy, and part of that is ensuring their visual system functions properly.

Children's eye exams are covered by Manitoba Health for children under 19

Find an optometrist near you by visiting our website www.optometrists.mb.ca and clicking on "Find an Optometrists"

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Infants

At birth, your baby can see blurred patterns of light and dark. During their four months, your child's vision becomes clearer, colour vision begins to develop, and their two eyes start to work together. By the time they're six months old, your baby will acquire eye movement control and develop eye-hand coordination skills.

The Canadian Association of Optometrists recommend that babies have their first eye examination between 6 to nine months of age to ensure their eyes are healthy, eye muscle movements and alignment are developing properly and the eyes are focusing together. A number of serious eye conditions exists that can be identified during the first eye exam. If left uncorrected, these conditions can result in serious vision problems.

Crossed eyes, or strabismus, usually starts in infancy and needs to be treated with eyeglasses, contact lenses, prisms, eyepatching, eye drops and/or vision therapy as early as possible. If left untreated, the ignored eye will become unable to function normally and may result in the development of amblyopia (lazy eye). If detected and treated, it will often resolve completely.

Toddlers and Preschoolers

Visual development continues into the preschool years - depth perception, eye-hand coordination and visualization skills. Your child cannot describe how they're seeing because they have no point of comparison. The best way to ensure proper visual development is for your child to have regular eye exams. The Canadian Association of Optometrists recommend children have at least one eye exam between the ages of two and five, and yearly after starting school.

Possible Signs of Vision Problems

Be alert for symptoms that could indicate your child has a visual problem, including:

- Squinting, rubbing the eyes or excessive blinking
- Tilting the head or unusual posture
- Red, itchy or watering eyes
- Covering or closing one eye
- Avoiding books and television
- Visible frustration or grimacing
- Sensitivity to light
- A lack of concentration
- An eye that turns in or out
- Covering or closing one eye