**CHILDREN & THEIR VISION**

Good vision is key to a child’s development, learning, and overall well-being. Recognizing and correcting vision concerns in children early on is important to prevent vision loss.

**Recognizing the signs of vision concerns**

Children may not know they have a vision concern. If you or school staff notice any of these signs, your child should see your primary care provider or eye doctor (optometrist):

* headaches or irritability
* red, itchy, watery eyes or discharge
* rubbing their eyes or blinking a lot
* eyes look crossed or don’t move together
* tilting of the head or unusual posture
* losing place while reading or using a finger to follow words
* holding things close to their face
* sitting close to the TV
* trouble focusing or not doing well in school
* avoiding activities needing distance vision
* lack of coordination or clumsiness

**Vision Care**

The B.C. Doctors of Optometry recommend that children have their vision checked before starting kindergarten and yearly while in school. The B.C.’s Medical Services Plan covers one eye exam each year for children under the age of 19. Call the clinic beforehand to confirm if there are any extra costs.

The Healthy Kids Program can help families with low-income cover some of the cost of prescription glasses for children under age 19.

Tips to protect your child’s eyes:

* Have them wear sunglasses with 99-100% UVA and UVB protection or hats that shade the face and eye when they are outdoors
* Teach children to play safely with toys and not to run with sharp objects
* Remind them to take breaks when reading or using screens – and to blink!

For more information:

* B.C. Doctors of Optometry - [Children’s Resources](https://bc.doctorsofoptometry.ca/patients/childrens-resources/)
* HealthLink BC – [Young children and their vision](https://www.healthlinkbc.ca/healthlinkbc-files/young-children-and-their-vision) | [Elementary school age children and their vision](https://www.healthlinkbc.ca/healthlinkbc-files/elementary-school-age-children-and-their-vision)
* B.C. Government - [Healthy Kids](https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/governments/policies-for-government/bcea-policy-and-procedure-manual/health-supplements-and-programs/healthy-kids)