

children's HEALTH

Good Vision Keeps Success In Sight For Children

(NAPSA)—Making sure children get regular, comprehensive eye exams is a key way that parents can identify treatable problems early and help kids achieve their greatest potential—in the classroom, at home and in sports.

Studies show that around 60 percent of children who have been identified as problem learners actually suffer from undetected vision problems and may mistakenly be diagnosed with attention deficit disorder (ADD) or attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), according to the American Optometric Association.

For many children, their only regular vision assessment is a school screening; however, simple screenings are meant to indicate a potential need for further evaluation, not to diagnose or treat a problem. According to The Vision Council, recent studies estimate that 40 to 67 percent of children identified with vision problems during school screenings do not receive the recommended follow-up care by an eye care professional.

Dr. Joel Zaba, a spokesperson for The Vision Council and national lecturer on children's vision and learning problems, says a vision examination by a licensed eye care professional can identify conditions that may permanently threaten a child's eyesight if not treated early-on, such as amblyopia (lazy eye).



In addition to getting the proper preventative care, parents should be vigilant about noticing any signs of eye problems.

Other treatable disorders that can affect the one in four school-age children who has vision problems are crossed eyes, nearsightedness, farsightedness and astigmatism. In addition, eye focusing, eye tracking and eye coordination problems may affect a child's performance in school and sports.

"The majority of what we learn is through the visual processing of information, and if a child has an undiagnosed vision problem, then it will have an impact upon his or her ability to succeed in school," said Zaba. "So just as you regularly schedule your child for an annual physical or dental appointment, every child should have regular comprehensive vision examinations performed by an eye care professional."

Early in the school year, when vision problems often become apparent, is an ideal time to schedule an exam. While finances are tight for many families, affordable, high-quality vision care options are available, such as those at Walmart Vision Centers, which have independent, licensed optometrists working in or adjacent to the store. There are around 3,000 Walmart Vision Centers across the country, which provide complete eye exams and advice on vision corrections, affordable lenses, frames and contacts.

In addition to getting the proper preventative care, parents should be vigilant about noticing any signs of eye problems.

"A child may assume he or she sees the same way everyone else does, not knowing there is a problem and that the parent or teacher needs to know about it," said Zaba. That is why it is important to be aware of the symptoms of vision problems in children. Frequent eye rubbing or blinking, holding reading materials close to the face, redness or tearing in the eyes, headaches when reading or writing, squinting or covering one eye, tilting the head to one side, losing place when reading—these are all signs that a child may have vision problems and needs to be seen by an eye care professional.