



# Eye on Health

## Vision Is Key To Infant Development

(NAPSA)—Parents need to be knowledgeable about how to evaluate their infant's visual development.

That's because it's estimated that one in 10 children is at risk from an undiagnosed eye or vision problem that, if left untreated, can lead to difficulties later in school or even permanent vision loss.

Knowing whether a baby's vision is maturing on schedule can be confusing, so parents should be aware of some basic signs of normal development:

- For the first six to eight weeks, babies' eyes don't always track together—and that's normal. The American Optometric Association (AOA) advises that parents should only be concerned if the eyes never track together.

- During the first four months, an infant should begin to follow moving objects with his or her eyes and start reaching for things.

- Between months eight and 12, babies are using both eyes together to judge distance and to grasp and throw objects with greater precision. Crawling is important for developing the eye-hand-foot-body coordination he'll need for normal movement for the rest of his life.

To check visual development or address problems that parents have observed, a baby's eyes should be examined before his first birthday. As part of a nationwide public health program, parents can bring their infant to a participating optometrist for a no-cost eye and vision assessment.

"Many eye and vision conditions don't have symptoms that can be easily identified by a par-



ent or in a well-baby checkup," said Dr. Peter Kehoe, president of the AOA and an InfantSEE program provider. "An infant should have her first eye health and vision assessment between 6 and 12 months of age. Early detection is the best way to make sure that a child has healthy eyes and appropriate vision development."

Although vision and eye health problems aren't common, it's important to identify children who have specific risk factors early so that any issues can be addressed before they negatively affect a child's overall development and quality of life.

"The good news about a trip to the optometrist is that most babies seem to enjoy the 'games' we use to determine whether their visual development is progressing normally and their eyes are healthy," said Dr. Kehoe. Parents can hold their infant during the assessment while the optometrist tests for visual acuity, eye teaming and overall eye health.

To find a participating doctor, visit the program's Web site at [www.infantsee.org](http://www.infantsee.org).