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# What parents should know about eye health

Did you know that 80 per cent of what a child learns is through vision? Sadly, 86 per cent of children start school without ever having an eye examination and an average of one in four children has an undetected vision problem that can interfere with their ability to read and learn.

Given those statistics, it shouldn't surprise anyone that proper eye care and eyewear are critical to a child's performance inside and outside the classroom.

"Many parents and caregivers rely on the basic vision screenings provided at school to check for eye problems," explains Rachel Hill Campbell, an optician from St. Catharines. "Those screenings are simply not enough. These basic vision screenings are only to check for distance vision, which is how well a child can read a chart from 20 feet away."

In fact, near vision isn't typically tested during in-school screenings, but it is especially important for everyday activities such as reading and looking at a computer screen.

"Strictly relying on these basic vision screenings can mean missing some of the most common childhood vision problems, such as a lack of eye co-ordination, a lazy eye, and farsightedness," says Campbell.

Undiagnosed vision problems are one of the major causes of learning difficulties in school-age children. These kinds of unresolved issues can lead children to exhibit a lack of attention or make them appear to be fidgety during the school day. Monitoring your children's vision may help the chances of them succeeding in the classroom.

Common signs of possible vision problems in children can include:

- holding reading materials too close to the eyes,
- constantly rubbing the eyes,
- continuously squinting and
- having irritated or teary eyes.

Eye health experts suggest that regular eye exams should be scheduled as regularly as doctor and dentist appointments. These regular checkups will help parents ensure potential issues are identified early and that appropriate action is taken.

You can get help to find an eye care professional near you online at [www.eyedidntknowthat.ca](http://www.eyedidntknowthat.ca)

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