

Sweet Sight

Vision Care for Your Sugar Land Kid

Written by Julie Battelle Select Photos by Marisa Hugonnett



Zachary Huwel models his new pair of glasses

My daughter was not the star artist in her preschool class. Worksheets came home with Crayola scribbles way out of the lines and cutting projects had jagged edges that missed the mark wildly of where they were supposed to be. But I was unfazed - after all she was only 4 years old. It wasn't until my first parents' night when she was in kindergarten that I realized something was wrong - my daughter's work stood out among the others for its crude handwriting and poor coloring skill. I began working with her at home to cut on a straight line and color neatly and was surprised by her inability to do what seemed to be so simple. Then, about two months into kindergarten, the nurse sent a note home with the suggestion to take her to an eye doctor. A common eye problem known as amblyopia (or lazy eye) was the culprit of my daughter's messy work. Although glasses didn't turn out to be the quick fix that I'd hoped for, I am now armed with a better understanding of her condition, and how it affects her schoolwork and other areas of her life.

Catching Vision Problems Early

Vision screenings at an early age can help diagnose problems like amblyopia early on and can also reassure you that your child's eyes are developing normally. Sources vary on when a child's first visit to the eye doctor should be. The American Optometric Association suggests that children be examined by an eye care professional when they are as young as 6 months old, while the American Academy of Pediatrics suggests vision exams begin when a child is 3 or 4 years old.

Check-ups for Changing Eyes

An annual eye check-up is essential for children already diagnosed with vision issues, says Dr. Dan Wishnow of Wishnow Sugar Vision Group in Sugar Land. "When a child has a growth spurt, chances are their vision has changed," he says. "Growing taller

Signs Your Sweetie Needs an Eye Exam

- Squinting to see up close or far away.
- One eye that seems to drift off or crossed eyes that follow a pattern may be a sign of lazy eye.
- Closing or putting a hand over one eye to see better could be a sign of lazy eye or astigmatism.
- Rubbing eyes excessively or frequent headaches may signal irregular eye strain.





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makes the eye longer and thus changes the refractive status of the eyes.” These changes are likely to require a tweak in your tike’s prescription as little eyes grow, too. A yearly trip to the eye doctor can help monitor young eyes that quickly change. Vision problems can affect a child’s performance in the classroom, too, as was the case with my daughter. Almost 25 percent of school-age children have vision problems that can interfere with learning, according to the College of Optometrists in Vision Development. An eye exam early on can help catch and correct vision problems that may affect a child’s progress.

“When a child has a growth spurt, chances are their vision has changed,” he says. “Growing taller makes the eye longer and thus changes the refractive status of the eyes.”

-Dr. Dan Wishnow

Glasses or Contacts?

If your child does have trouble seeing, how do you decide between glasses or contacts for them? Prescription in hand, my daughter and I peruse frame after frame. She’s not a kindergartner anymore though, and glasses aren’t the fun fashion that they used to be to her. Now, my ‘tween wants contacts. But can kids be too young for contacts? “Compliance is the biggest factor of wearing glasses over contacts when it comes to kids,” says Dr. Wishnow, who usually prescribes glasses for children 5 years and younger “Glasses are easier and have a much lower risk of infection versus contact lenses.”

Knowing your child and how responsible they are is the major litmus test for contacts. A child who forgets to put her glasses on before walking out the door for school will surely have a harder time remembering her contact lenses routine every day. Likewise, contacts require more maintenance and cleaning than glasses. The results with contact lenses, when used properly, can be as effective as glasses, but the key is using them correctly and consistently. Visit SugarLandMagazine.com for a list of local vision care specialists. SLM

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Kids & Contact Lenses

Some optometrists are reluctant to prescribe contact lenses to children younger than 12, however, studies show younger children can be just as responsible about contact lens care as teens. Children in the study reported contacts were much easier to wear for sports, dancing, and other activities.

Tips for Contact Lens Success

Talk to your child and optometrist - Discuss your child’s maturity, motivation to wear them, and other factors to see if he’s ready.

Choose daily contacts - The risk of eye infection is lower because no re-use or maintenance is needed.

Monitor usage - Check to ensure proper hand washing and removal is taking place.

Report problems - If your child has eye redness, pain, or discharge, call your doctor.

Have eyeglasses too - In case eye infections or contacts problems arise.

