

Eye Exam Requirements and Eye Health In Children

Eye examinations are required for all students entering kindergarten and for students entering an Illinois school for the very first time in any grade level.

Adequate functioning of the visual system and the development of eyesight are critical to student learning. Visual function includes the ability to see clearly near and far, or “visual acuity”. Additionally, functional vision skills include: eye focusing (maintaining clear vision quickly and accurately at changing distances such as from a book to the board); eye tracking (sustaining eye focus when looking from one object to another such as along a printed page); eye teaming (coordination of both eyes for moving along a page or judging distances and depth); eye-hand coordination (ability to use visual information to coordinate the actions of the hands such as when trying to catch a ball); and visual perception (organizing images so that understanding and retention is possible). These skills are integral to a student’s educational performance and physical development.

The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that children have their eyes assessed by their pediatrician at following ages: birth, by 6 months of age, at 3 to 4 years of age, and every year beginning at 5 years of age. If concerns are found during these routine exams, a referral to an eye doctor/specialist may be recommended.

Here are some common symptoms of eye and vision concerns:

- Eyes that turn in or out or do not seem to focus together or any change in the eyes from how they usually look
- White or grayish-white color in the pupil
- Eyes that flutter quickly from side to side or up and down
- Bulging eye(s)
- Complains of eye pain, double vision, itchiness, or discomfort
- Redness in either eye that doesn't go away in a few days
- Pus or crust in either eye
- Eyes that are continuously watery
- Drooping eyelid(s)
- Rubbing or squinting of the eyes often
- Eyes that are always sensitive to light
- Frequent eye rubbing or blinking
- Short attention span
- Avoiding reading and other close activities
- Frequent headaches
- Covering one eye
- Tilting the head to one side
- Holding reading materials close to the face
- Losing place when reading
- Difficulty remembering what he or she read

If you notice any of these signs, please contact your pediatrician and/or your family's eye care provider for an evaluation.

Sources/Resources:

American Academy of Pediatrics (<https://www.healthychildren.org/English/health-issues/conditions/eyes/Pages/Warning-Signs-of-Vision-Problems-in-Children.aspx> & <https://www.healthychildren.org/English/health-issues/conditions/eyes/Pages/Vision-Screenings.aspx>)

American Optometric Association: <http://www.aoa.org/patients-and-public/good-vision-throughout-life/childrens-vision/school-aged-vision-6-to-18-years-of-age?sso=y>