

As parents, ensuring the health and well-being of our children is a top priority. One crucial aspect often overlooked is their eye health. Vision development is a critical process that begins in the womb and continues through adolescence, with the first six years being the most vulnerable. Here's what you need to know to safeguard your child's vision and manage potential issues such as myopia.

Understanding Vision Development

Children's vision is fundamental to their learning and development, with 80% of their learning being through the visual system. Unfortunately, many visual problems go unnoticed because children might not realize their vision is impaired. Regular eye exams are essential for early detection and treatment of vision issues.

The Rising Concern of Myopia

Myopia, or nearsightedness, is becoming increasingly common among children. By 2030, nearly half of North America is expected to be myopic. This condition occurs when the eye grows too quickly, making it difficult to see distant objects clearly. Myopia not only affects vision but also increases the risk of more severe eye conditions like myopic maculopathy, glaucoma, and retinal detachment.

Preventing Myopia

While genetics play a role, lifestyle factors significantly influence myopia development. Encouraging children to spend more time outdoors—about two hours daily—can reduce the risk. Managing screen time is also crucial. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends no screen time for children under 18 months and limited screen time for children to 5 years old.

Myopia Management Treatments

Several treatments can help manage myopia in children:

- MiSight 1 Day Contact Lenses: These are the only FDA-approved contact lenses to slow myopia progression and are safe for children aged 8 and older. Most children adapt quickly and find that contact lenses enhance their social acceptance and ability to participate in sports.
- Orthokeratology (Ortho-K): These are specialized hard contact lenses worn overnight to reshape the cornea. This allows clear vision during the day without the need for glasses or contact lenses, while concurrently decreasing the signal eye lengthening.
- Atropine Eye Drops: Low-concentration atropine drops can slow myopia progression with minimal side effects that are typically noted with the full-strength versions.
- Stellest Lenses: the first eyeglass lenses that are FDA approved to slow down nearsightedness in children. They look like normal glasses, but inside the lens they use something called H.A.L.T. technology—a clear center for sharp vision surrounded by tiny, invisible lenslets. These lenslets create a gentle signal that helps keep the eye from growing too long, which is what causes nearsightedness to worsen. Stellest lenses are a great choice for kids who prefer glasses, while older children might also consider contact lenses for myopia control.

Balancing Screen Time

Given the inevitable integration of screens into our daily lives, it's essential to balance screen use with outdoor activities. Encourage breaks during screen time—5-10 minutes every hour—and maintaining a healthy routine to protect your child's vision is essential.

Take Action Now

Early intervention is key to managing and preventing vision problems. Schedule regular eye exams and adopt healthy habits to ensure your child's vision contributes positively to their overall development. By taking proactive steps today, you can protect your child's vision and help them see a brighter future.

For more information on managing myopia, visit MiSight, American Optometric Association, and World Society of Paediatric Ophthalmology and Strabismus.

References:

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