Public Health England

Vision screening for 4 to 5 year olds

Information for parents

Public Health England supports vision screening for 4 to 5 year olds

Vision screening

The NHS recommends vision screening at age 4 to 5 years. We want to identify children with reduced vision in one or both eyes. The aim is to detect any problems early so your child can receive effective treatment.

Reduced vision

Vision continues to develop from birth to around 8 years of age. Children rarely complain of having poor vision and it can easily go unnoticed, especially if it only affects one eye. Reduced vision can have an impact on a child's learning and development. This is why we recommend vision screening at age 4 to 5 years.

Reduced vision is caused by the brain not receiving a clear image from one or both eyes. Reasons could include factors such as the shape of the eye or a 'turn' in the eye (squint). Glasses and/or eye patches may be recommended as part of the treatment.

The screening test

Vision screening is usually carried out in your child's school. If your child is not in school long term, other arrangements can be made.

We will assess your child's vision using a letter matching test. The test is fun and your child does NOT need to know their letters. We will put an eye patch over one eye or use a pair of glasses with one eye blanked out.

The test is entirely safe and children enjoy playing the letter matching game.

Possible results

If screening suggests reduced vision, we will send you a letter confirming this and we will refer your child for further tests. These could take place at:

- a hospital eye service
- a community eye service
- your local opticians (by an optometrist)

We will then recommend the best treatment for your child.

Find out more on NHS Choices: **www.nhs.uk/childrens-eyes**

If screening does not suggest reduced vision, we will send you a letter confirming this. Vision screening should find most problems but like all types of screening it is not perfect and may not find every child with reduced vision.

Your child's vision will change over time. Further information is provided in your child's 'red book'. If you are worried at any time that your child is not seeing properly, you should arrange to see an optician or GP.

Screening is optional

You can choose whether you want your child to have vision screening. This screening test is the only chance for all children to get their vision tested. This enables problems to be found and treated quickly at the start of their school life.

A vision screening test taking place

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More information about child vision screening: www.nhs.uk/childrens-eyes

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