



Partial Vision Loss

What is partial vision loss?

Partial vision loss means that a child has trouble doing things such as seeing close-up, reading, or writing. Vision loss is not the same as blindness. Partial vision loss means that a child needs help, such as eyeglasses or contact lenses to see. Most kinds of partial vision loss can be corrected so that the child can see more clearly.

What is the cause?

Vision loss can be caused by damage to the eye itself, by the eye being shaped incorrectly, or by a problem in the brain. Some kinds of vision problems in children include:

Astigmatism

Astigmatism means that part of the eye has an irregular shape, more like a football than a round ball. This condition is very common, and can often be corrected with glasses or contacts.

Myopia (Nearsightedness)

In myopia, the eyeball is too long and the eye does not focus well. As a result, things that are far away look blurry.

Hyperopia (Farsightedness)

In this condition, the eyeball is too short and the eye does not focus well. Children with this problem may strain to see. Sometimes they also have crossed eyes (strabismus).

Strabismus (Crossed Eyes)

Strabismus means eyes that are not straight or do not line up with each other. If the problem is not treated, it can cause amblyopia.

Amblyopia (Lazy Eye)

Lazy eye, or amblyopia, is reduced vision in one eye. This happens when the eye and the brain do not work together properly. The eye looks normal, but the brain favors the other eye.

Color Deficiency (Color Blindness)

Children with color blindness are not really blind to color. Instead, they have trouble telling some colors apart.

Retinopathy of Prematurity

In some premature babies, abnormal blood vessels may start to grow inside the eye. This may be a minor problem, but it could also be very serious. All premature babies should have their eyes checked soon after birth.

What are the symptoms?

If one or more of these signs appear, take your child to an eye doctor right away.

- Your child's eyes don't line up. Check if one eye appears crossed or looks to the side instead of straight ahead.
- The eyelids are red-rimmed, crusted, or swollen, or the eyes look watery or red.

You should also be concerned if your child:

- Rubs his or her eyes a lot, or complains that they are itchy, burning, or feel scratchy.
- Closes or covers one eye
- Tilts his head or thrusts his head forward
- Has trouble reading or doing other close-up work, or holds objects close to her eyes to see
- Blinks more than usual or seems cranky when looking at things close-up
- Says that things are blurry or hard to see
- Gets headaches or gets dizzy after doing close-up work
- Squints his eyes or frowns.

How is it diagnosed?

Your child should be checked for vision problems at:

- Newborn to 3 months
- 6 months to 1 year
- About 3 years
- About 5 years.

Having your child's vision checked is especially important if someone in your family has had vision problems.

How is it treated?

Several types of treatments may be used, depending on the type of eye problem and its cause.

- Glasses may help improve focusing and redirect the line of sight. This helps the eyes to straighten.
- Medicine in the form of eye drops or ointment may be used, with or without glasses.
- Surgery may be done on eye muscles to straighten the eyes if nonsurgical means are unsuccessful. Surgery may help the eyes to work together better.
- Eye exercises may be recommended either before or after surgery.

How can I help my child?

Newborn infants should have their eyes checked while still in the hospital nursery.

During regular well baby exams, from birth to 2 years of age, your child's health care provider will check for eye problems. Beginning at age 3 and continuing through 10 years of age, vision screenings should be done to check visual acuity (using an eye chart) and ocular alignment (such as following a moving object and looking in the eye with a special light). If you or your health care provider thinks there could be a problem, your child should go to an eye specialist. There are 3 kinds of eye specialists:

1. Ophthalmologists are medical doctors. They can give eye exams, diagnose and treat eye diseases, and even do surgery.
2. Optometrists can check vision and diagnose eye problems.
3. Opticians are eye specialists who fill prescriptions for eyeglasses and contact lenses.

To find out who to speak to in your area, you can contact the National Dissemination Center for Children with Disabilities by logging on to <http://www.nichcy.org/> or calling 1-800-695-0285. In addition, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has information about vision loss on their Web site <http://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd>.

*NOTE: This information is provided as a public educational service. The information does not replace any of the instructions your physician gives you. If you have a medical emergency please call 911 or call the Hospital at (208) 529-6111. If you have questions about your child's care, please call Idaho Falls Pediatrics at (208) 522-4600.