

Your Babies Eyes

Parents play an important role in helping to assure their child's eyes and vision develop properly.

Steps that every parent should take include:

Watching for signs of eye and vision problems.

Help stimulate the development of their child's vision by engaging in age-suitable activities.

Seek professional eye care starting with the first comprehensive eye test at about 6 months of age.

At all ages:

If you notice any of the following you should take your child to see a health professional as soon as possible.

- An opaque, white glow or white reflection in the pupil of an eye (dark area in the centre of the eye.)
- A missing or altered "red eye" reflection in photographs.
- Instances where the eyes do not appear to look in the same direction (a squint.)
- Watery, red, sore or swollen eyes for no obvious reason.
- Drooping eyelids
- A change in the colour of the iris (the coloured part of the eye) **ESPECIALLY** if only in one area.
- Increasing sensitivity to light
- You suspect that there may be a deterioration in sight

At birth, babies do not see as well as older children or adults. Their eyes and visual system aren't fully developed. But significant improvement occurs during the first few months of life.

The following are some milestones to watch for in vision and child development. It is important to remember that not every child is the same and some may reach certain milestones at different ages.

Babies born prematurely or with low birth weights are more likely to have vision problems. This is because their eyes miss out on the final stages of development at the end of pregnancy.

Age	What to expect	Things you can do
Birth to 3 months	The world is a blur to a new-born. Anything more than 20-30 cm from their face will be a blur. They may only hold their gaze for a few seconds and will not be able to fixate with both eyes. It will be normal for their eyes to “wander” at this age.	Develop that visual bond with them by trying to stay 20-30 cm when interacting with them – by 2 weeks they may start to recognize you! (Tip: Don't change your appearance too much during this time - it will make it harder for them to recognise you.) Encourage equal visual development of both eyes by alternating sides when feeding.

Age	What to expect	Things you can do
Birth to 3 months	<p>Their world is black and white, with shades of grey!</p> <p>Their vision is only just starting to develop - They will only see large shapes, high contrast (big differences between dark and light) objects, bright lights and movement.</p>	<p>Use movements and bright contrasting colours (black, white and primary colours – reds, blues and yellows) in their room and with their toys to help stimulate their vision.</p>
<p>Tip: You can leave a night light on in the nursery, it won't disturb their sleep and may make it easier for you when attending their needs in the night.</p>		
3 -6 months	<p>Depth and colour perception start to develop.</p> <p>They should start to watch and study their own hands as well as toys.</p>	<p>Help develop their eye tracking by talking to them as you walk around the room.</p> <p>Encourage visual development by frequently adding/changing and moving objects around their cot and room.</p>

Age	What to expect	Things you can do
<p>3 – 6 months</p>	<p>Soon they should begin to follow moving objects with their eyes and start to reach for things around them.</p> <p>Eye movement control and eye-body coordination skills steadily continue to improve - soon they can move their eyes independently from their head.</p>	<p>Start to develop their visual memory by playing “peek-a-boo” and similar games.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Six months of age is an important milestone. This is when your child should have their First Eye Examination.</p>		
<p>6 – 9 months</p>	<p>Their ability to hold attention increases to a few seconds.</p> <p>Crawling typically starts between 6 and 10 months.</p>	<p>Now is the time to start showing and reading simple books to them.</p> <p>Encourage the crawling phase - it helps develop better eye-hand coordination.</p>

Age	What to expect	Things you can do
6 – 9 months	They should start to show interest in pictures, and recognize partially hidden objects.	Further develop their visual memory by playing “hide and seek” with toys under a blanket then revealing it to them.

By 10 months your baby's eyes will probably be close to their final colour.

9 – 12 months	<p>By 10 months of age, babies should be able to grasp objects with thumb and forefinger.</p> <p>They should be able to judge distances fairly well and throw things with precision.</p>	<p>Play simple games like building blocks and rolling a ball back and forth.</p> <p>These help develop that grasp and also improves eye movement co-ordination and hand-eye coordination.</p>
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**It's normal - Babies don't blink much.
(On average only about 2 or 3 times a minute.)**

By two years of age, a child's eye-hand coordination and depth perception should be well developed and their vision almost adult levels.

It is recommended that children should have their eyes examined annually, and especially if there is any known family history of eye problems or wearing glasses at an early age.

Children may not realise they have a vision problem so, without routine tests, there's a risk a problem may not be spotted. This may affect their development and education.

The sooner any eye problem is found, the sooner you and your child will be able to get any treatment and support needed.

NHS sight tests are FREE for children under 16.

Specialists In Paediatric Eye Care



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