

The Development of Your Child's Vision



From the first moment of a child's life he/she has everything needed for a life of excellent vision. Seeing is just a matter of learning the proper skills. At first, a child does not see in color, but rather in black and white, and various shades of gray. This will change, however, around the four month mark, when a baby begins to see colors. In the beginning, a baby can only discern objects within eight to twelve inches of their face. Slowly but surely, a baby begins to learn to focus further out, until he/she is able, first, to focus on faces and then eventually on objects of interest, such as brightly colored toys. By the eight to twelve week mark, a baby should be able to start moving his/her eyes to follow people or objects. "By four months, you can expect your child to reach for objects as he/she works on both depth perception and hand-eye coordination." adds Dr. Michael Oulahan of Family Vision Clinic in Dartmouth, Nova Scotia.

Dr. Miriam Debly, also of Family Vision Clinic relates, "Parents often come to us concerned that their two or three month old seems to be having trouble coordinating their eye movements. I advise them that this is perfectly normal, since it usually takes until around the fourth or fifth month to master the coordination of his/her eyes." By month four or five, your baby should have mastered the art of using both eyes together to help interpret and interact with the world around him or her. This facilitates the process by which the brain takes the two slightly different images sent to it by each eye and translates them into one unified, interpreted image, known as binocular vision or binocular fusion. Depth perception is also made possible as your child becomes better at using both eyes in unison. Your baby's vision should be fully developed by six months of age.

At roughly the six to twelve month mark, your baby should begin to crawl and then, soon thereafter, walk. This newfound mobility requires a whole new set of skills. Your baby will need to learn to judge distance, which is important to keep from bumping into things as they navigate and investigate the world around them.

As your child becomes a toddler it will become very important to continue development of hand-eye and hand-body coordination, eye teaming, and depth perception. “Some great ways to help develop these essential skills in a fun way is to play with your child by stacking blocks, rolling a ball, coloring and drawing.” advises Dr. Jodi Killoran. By the time your child is ready to enter school, he/she should have all the visual ability required for proper learning.

The government of Canada recommends that children receive a comprehensive eye exam at least once a year, and even provides a program, known as Eye see, Eye Learn, which provides all Pre-K children with a free eye exam. This helps ensure that every child's vision is developing as it should and to diagnose any eye conditions before they grow into something worse. Many eye conditions, such as strabismus and amblyopia, can be corrected easily if caught early, but can do irreversible damage that will affect a child into adulthood if left undiagnosed and untreated for too long. It is also important to be sure that your child enjoys good eyesight for learning in school. An eye doctor will check whether your child needs vision correction for nearsightedness, farsightedness or astigmatism and will check for basic skills that are important for your child's success in the classroom, such as eye movement skills, peripheral awareness and depth perception.

For more information, come visit us today at Family Vision Clinic.