

WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A VISION SCREENING AND AN EYE EXAMINATION?



If I hadn't brought my son, I don't know how long we would have gone . . . he wasn't aware . . . the teacher wasn't aware, and I know when he got his glasses he was like, "Wow". . . . And he kept saying to his sister, "You can just see like this without them?" He was just in amazement. *



WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW:

We can't see that kids can't see. Kids rarely know they can't see. Vision screening helps find children who need to see an eye doctor for an eye examination to find out if children have vision disorders or eye health problems.

WHY SHOULD YOUR CHILD HAVE A VISION SCREENING?

Vision screening is done to find children who may have or be at risk of having a vision disorder or eye health problem that could affect their learning, social and emotional development, ability to play sports, and even future job opportunities.

WHAT IS A VISION SCREENING?

Trained vision screeners look at your child's eyes for signs and symptoms of vision problems. They also use eye charts or digital instruments to check your child's vision and eyes. Vision screeners cannot tell you if your child has a vision disorder. They will tell you if your child appears to see okay or they will refer your child for an eye examination by an eye doctor.

WHERE IS VISION SCREENING DONE?

Vision screening is done in the community where you live. Vision screening happens at your Head Start program, preschool, school, public health department, and in your child's health care provider's office during a well-child visit.



WHAT DO YOU DO IF YOUR CHILD IS REFERRED FROM A VISION SCREENING FOR AN EYE EXAMINATION BY AN EYE DOCTOR?

You call an eye doctor and make an appointment for your child to have an eye examination. You may need to make an appointment with your child's primary health care provider to receive a referral for an eye examination. Either way, tell your child's primary health care provider or eye doctor that your child received a referral from a vision screening.

The eye doctor might be an ophthalmologist, an optometrist, a pediatric ophthalmologist, or a pediatric optometrist. The eye doctor doing your child's eye examination should be trained and experienced in working with young children.

Passing a vision screening does not mean there is no chance of your child having a vision disorder or eye health problem. Vision can change every year. If your child passes a vision screening and you still have a concern about how well your child can see, take your child to an eye doctor for an eye examination.

WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A VISION SCREENING AND AN EYE EXAMINATION?

Vision screening determines if your child should see an eye doctor for an eye examination. The eye doctor might be an ophthalmologist, an optometrist, a pediatric ophthalmologist, or a pediatric optometrist. The eye doctor doing your child's eye examination should be trained and experienced in working with young children.

Only the eye doctor can tell you if your child has a vision or eye health problem and whether any treatment is required. The eye doctor will recommend specific treatment if your child has a vision or eye health problem.

The eye doctor might prescribe eyeglasses or tell you everything looks okay now, but you should make another appointment in 6 months or 1 year.

If your child's eye doctor tells you that your child's vision and eye health is okay, but recommends you return for a follow-up visit, please know this was not a "bad" referral or your vision screeners were incorrect. Your child is in the eye care system, and the eye doctor will check your child's vision again the next visit to decide if your child needs glasses at that time.

Passing a vision screening does not mean there is no chance of your child having a vision problem. Vision can change every year. If your child passes a vision screening and you still have a concern about how well your child can see, take your child to an eye doctor for an eye examination.

REFERENCES:

*Irving, E. L., Sivak, A. M., & Spafford, M. M. (2018). "I can see fine": Patient knowledge of eye care. *Ophthalmic & Physiological Optics*, 38(4), 422–431. <https://doi.org/10.1111/opo.12566>



"Small Steps for Big Vision" is an initiative of the National Center for Children's Vision and Eye Health at Prevent Blindness (www.nationalcenter.preventblindness.org). For more information, contact: info@preventblindness.org

This project is supported by the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) as part of an award totaling \$300,000 with 5% financed with non-governmental sources. The contents are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily represent the official views of, nor an endorsement, by HRSA, HHS, or the U.S. Government. For more information, please visit HRSA.gov.