

## 2010 CHILDREN'S EYE HEALTH AND SAFETY FACT SHEET

- Amblyopia is responsible for more loss of vision in people age 45 and younger than all other eye diseases and trauma combined.
- According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), only one in three children in America have received eye care services before the age of six.
- More than 12.1 million school-age children, or one in four, have some form of vision problem. The NEI also reports that the most prevalent and significant vision disorders of preschool children are amblyopia (2-5 percent), strabismus (3-4 percent) and significant refractive error (15-20 percent).
- About 80 percent of learning in a child's first 12 years comes through the eyes. (CheckYearly.com/ Vision Council of America)
- Often a child with a vision-based learning problem has excellent verbal skills, causing parents and educators to think the child must be lazy, have ADD/ADHD, or is learning disabled. The possible misdiagnosis can be due to similar symptoms, but the causes are not the same. (College of Optometrists in Vision Development)
- Amblyopia is reduced vision in an eye that cannot be corrected by glasses alone. It can lead to monocular blindness if left untreated. With early detection and treatment, the chance for restoring vision is excellent. An encouraging recent study showed children up to the age of 17 can still be effectively treated for amblyopia.
- Amblyopia is the most common cause of visual impairment in childhood. It affects approximately 2 to 3 out of every 100 children. (National Eye Institute)
- Untreated amblyopia costs the U.S. nearly \$7.4 billion in earning power each year. There is a return of \$22 for each dollar spent on amblyopia diagnosis and treatment. (Membreno JH, Brown MM, Brown GC, Sharma S, Beauchamp GR., "A Cost Analysis of Therapy for Amblyopia," *Ophthalmology*, December 2002)
- Amblyopia has many causes. Any underlying condition that causes the brain to receive images of unequal quality in the two eyes (one eye focuses better than the other) can cause amblyopia. Most often it results from a misalignment of a child's eyes, such as crossed eyes (strabismus). There is an increased risk in pre-term infants, low birth weight infants and in children born with disabilities such as cerebral palsy and Down syndrome.
- About one in 50 children in America has strabismus. Half of these children are born with the condition. An illness or accident may also cause strabismus.

- Treatment options for strabismus include orthoptics (eye muscle training programs), vision therapy (orthoptics plus training and rehabilitation of the eye-brain connections involved in vision) and surgery. (Optometrists Network, strabismus.org)
- Congenital cataracts are present at birth but may not be identified until later in life. Cataract surgery is the treatment of choice and should be performed when patients are younger than 17 weeks to ensure minimal or no visual deprivation. Most ophthalmologists opt for surgery much earlier, ideally when patients are younger than 2 months, to prevent irreversible amblyopia. (Mounir Bashour, MD, PhD, "Cataract, Congenital," emedicine.com, April 2006)
- According to the International Glaucoma Association, glaucoma in infants is present in one in 10,000 births. Symptoms of glaucoma in babies and children may include:
  - Large eyes
  - Sensitivity to light
  - Cloudy eyes
  - Watering eyes
  - Poor vision and jerky eyes (Nystagmus)
  - Squinting
- Vision screenings and professional eye examinations are recommended as part of a continuum of vision care for children. Prevent Blindness America recommends children have their vision checked at infancy, 6 months, 3 years, 5 years and follow-ups as needed.
- The CDC reports that 40 percent of all sports-related eye injuries are to kids, ages 14 and younger. And, only 14.6 percent of kids say they consistently wear eye protection while playing sports. Boys were more likely to wear eye protection than girls.
- Keep dangerous household products out of reach of children and buy only toys that are age-appropriate.
- Protect your children's eyes from the sun. Kids should wear polycarbonate sunglasses to protect their eyes from harmful UV rays. The glasses should be marked with a label that indicates they provide 99-100 percent UV-A and UV-B protection. Wide-brimmed hats block about 50 percent of UV rays when worn alone.

**80 PERCENT** of children diagnosed with learning disabilities or poor learning performance have binocular vision problems.

Source: Solan, H.A., [The Treatment and Management of Children With Learning Disabilities](#)

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