

Ensure the best vision for your child

With the kids returning to school, parents will be turning their attention back to ensuring the best possible educational development outcomes for their child's progress. A massive amount of classroom information is transferred visually and so if a child suffers vision problems it can rob them of their enthusiasm and potential to learn.



Associate Professor Leo Hartley from h2 Vision Centres has extensive post-graduate training in paediatric optometry and is also a behavioural optometrist with decades of specialist experience under his belt. In assessing children of all ages, A/Professor Hartley uses state of the art technology to ensure a fully comprehensive paediatric optometry assessment that goes beyond the standard eye checks for children.

"Young children with vision problems often don't realise that they even have a problem, thinking that everyone sees the way that they do. Often children can have their confidence literally 'knocked out of them' by a subtle vision problem that makes their reading halting or slow," explains A/Professor Hartley.

Signs that may indicate a vision problem include unexplained headaches after close work or on school days, holding reading material or electronic devices very close, squinting or closing one eye, blinking excessively, avoiding reading, skipping, confusing small words (like 'then' for 'they');



'was' for 'saw' or 'no' for 'on'), frequently losing the place or the line, or having to 'refocus' after reading. They may complain of the print 'running together' or jumping. Often they avoid reading or say "it's boring" because they can't recall what they're reading.

Vision problems can put children off learning – focussing and eye coordination issues if undiagnosed can have significant impact on the ability of the child to comprehend as they 'read to learn'.

Their confidence can be affected when they may find they cannot recall what they've just read or too easily lose concentration when reading. Children with vision problems may make careless errors when performing maths.

Often correcting a child's vision problem can let parents and teachers see just how smart a child is as their reading fluency improves and their maths becomes more accurate.



Associate Professor Hartley completed his Fellowship in Behavioural Optometry in 1995. He practised as a paediatric optometrist in far north Queensland for several years and has worked with Dr Lionel Kowal, one of Australia's leading strabismologists (surgical management of turned eye) in Melbourne.

He also has enormous experience in managing vision problems in multi-handicapped children and has been invited to lecture on paediatric optometry at state, national and international level.

Apart from the usual short sightedness, long sightedness and astigmatism (distorted vision), eye coordination and focusing issues are often overlooked by non-paediatric trained eye professionals.

Interestingly incidences of vision problems are increasing as children get older and research is



finding that the genetic disposition for myopia or short sightedness can be 'switched on' from doing close work for example from using tablets and phones – an increasing occurrence in our technology savvy world.

At h2 Vision Centres, a child's eye examination contains the same elements of the adult examination – but with a far greater emphasis on extra tests of eye coordination and focusing abilities in children.

Often children with focusing and eye coordination issues have perfect distance vision, so unless extra tests to probe these functions are performed, several problems may be missed. Medicare has recognised the necessity of these tests adding a specific item number to allow extra time during a child's eye examination to investigate these functions.

Paediatric patients usually require longer consultation times to allow for a more careful history taking (involving developmental milestones, the child's school performance, any other health professionals' findings and management involved in the child's care). Many children with developmental problems also have visual problems, so this history is very important.

Then as well as a careful eye health examination and checks for long sightedness, short sightedness or astigmatism, careful tests of eye coordination and focusing are assessed.

Often the treatment for these problems can be as simple a pair of glasses for reading or simple vision training (orthoptic training) to correct the problems. Despite the simplicity of the treatment modality, the results are often remarkable, with the child now free to access their learning uninhibited by a visual problem.

To find out more drop in to h2 Vision Centres, located at 9/11 Chancellor Village Boulevard, Sippy Downs or call 5353 5080 for an appointment. You'll see...

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