Eye Health In- “Sights”

When is the best time for your child’s first eye examination?1

1. **First check**: Newborn check around 72 hours old, carried out by a doctor or midwife*.

2. **Second eye check**: Between 6-8 weeks old, carried out by a midwife or GP**.

3. **Vision screening**: Between 4-5 years old***.

4. **Comprehensive eye test with an optometrist**: From any age, but suggested start from 5 years old when the child starts their first year of school. Then every year until the age of 15****.

**Comprehensive Eye Test vs. Vision Screening?2**

**Vision Screening**
Vision screening checks for reduced vision in one or both eyes, as well as squints, muscle imbalance and binocular vision problems. Some children may receive vision screening during their early years at school, and it is usually performed at your child’s school, by an orthoptist or healthcare assistant. However, the test doesn’t happen in all schools or all areas. While useful, they don’t always detect if a child will become myopic - so it is important children have annual eye tests with an optometrist, from 5 years old, or earlier.

**Comprehensive Eye Test**
An optometrist will conduct your child’s comprehensive eye test. This test is important for early detection of things like myopia, childhood cataracts and colour blindness. Specialised tools and equipment are used to obtain a thorough picture of a child’s overall health, vision and visual skills.†

† In the presence of any symptoms, regardless of age, it is important to consult an eye health professional.

**What is Myopia?**
Myopia, also known as short-sightedness, is a disease which can cause blurry vision for objects far away.³

**How to Slow Onset or Progression of Myopia?5**

**Lifestyle Changes**
Positive lifestyle changes like taking regular breaks from screens and spending at least two hours a day outside have been shown to prevent or delay myopia onset. It is recommended that parents avoid screen use in children younger than 2-years-old.⁶

**Orthokeratology Lenses**
Lenses worn while asleep and removed when awake create a temporary change in corneal shape so that glasses aren’t needed during the day.

**Contact Lenses**
Soft multifocal or dual-focus contact lenses have been shown to correct myopic vision in children while simultaneously slowing myopia progression by decreasing eye growth.

**Glasses**
For children who may not be ready for contact lenses, myopia-control glasses are another option.

**High myopia can also increase the risk of other severe eye issues in later life:**

- Glaucoma
- Retinal detachment
- Cataracts
- Myopic Maculopathy/Degeneration

**How to Take Action**
Schedule your child’s comprehensive eye test if you think there are any issues with their vision and ask their optometrist about lifestyle changes and the new treatment options available to slow down the progression of myopia.

**References**

*This will follow the newborn check, within 72 hours of birth, and checks for any obvious problems that were not picked up soon after birth.
**This check usually takes place as part of the 8-week vaccinations for your newborn.
***Some children will receive vision screening in schools - but it doesn’t happen in all schools or all areas.
****If you’re concerned with your children’s eyesight you can always take them to your optometrists earlier. Children’s sight tests are funded by the NHS in the UK.