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Protect One of Your Child's Greatest Assets!

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Many of us are vigilant about getting sunblock on our child, but studies show that UV exposure from sunlight can lead to cataracts, growths on the eyes, cancer as an adult, and even blindness. **Certified Optician and Owner of [Family Vision Center](#), Kristine Heslin shared some important tips with me on how to protect our children's eyes.**



Elysa: What are some of the most important things we need to do to protect our kid's eyes from sun damage?

Kristine: *Make sure your children's sunglasses have 100% UV protection (it needs to say this on the label) and they wear them anytime they are out in the sun, even when it is overcast. Half of a person's lifetime exposure to UV rays occurs by 18 so paying attention to eye care early is important. Wearing a hat is important protection as well. (Kristine said that many stores and websites sell 100% UV protection sunglasses including [The Honest Company](#) and [Amazon.com](#)). Also, encourage your children to not look directly at the sun. Doing this can lead to premature macular degeneration, which can be untreatable and cause cloudiness and foggy vision.*

Kristine and I also talked about how to get your kids to wear their sunglasses and I mentioned that role modeling seems to work best for me. When I am wearing my sunglasses, my son asks for glasses.

Elysa: Aside from sun safety, I know there are many other eye health issues. How do I know if my child needs an eye exam?

Kristine: *The ability to see 20/20 vision develops between the ages of 3-7 years old. By the age of seven, the eye has already developed central vision and the window of opportunity to fix any visual problems is*

gone. A child's initial eye exam should be conducted by the age of three and can be done by an optometrist or ophthalmologist.

Elysa: What happens at an eye exam for a child?

Kristine: We use different age appropriate actions such as checking recognition of shapes and letters at various distances.

Elysa: Are there symptoms of eye issues that parents should watch out for?

Kristine: Behavioral indications that may signify vision difficulties in children include: Holding books too close to eyes, rubbing eyes repeatedly, frowning, squinting and blinking, confusing similar words, leaning forward in the seat, complaining of headaches after reading, shutting or covering one eye, developing red or crusty eyes, frequent daydreaming, holding head at an angle, repeating unusual eye movements, dropping or spilling objects, dislike and avoidance of close work.

Elysa: How about other issues like cross eyes and lazy eyes. Do children grow out of these or do they need to seek an eye health professional?

Kristine: You should always seek treatment for eye issues like these as they can worsen or cause other eye issues if not treated properly.

Elysa: What else should parents know about eye health?

Kristine: August is Children's Eye Health and Safety Month and we want to make sure parents know that 90% of sports-related eye injuries in children can be prevented with the use of protective eyewear during sporting activities. Unfortunately, eye injuries are a leading cause of blindness. Protective eyewear includes safety glasses and goggles, safety shields, and eye guards specifically designed to provide the correct protection for a certain activity. They provide superior protection because lenses are made of polycarbonate, which is 10 times stronger than other plastics. Don't let your child step onto the field or court unless he or she is wearing the proper safety gear from head to toe, including protective eyewear.

Great information Kristine! Thank you!

What tips do you have to encourage your kids to wear their sunglasses, hats, and/or protective eyewear?

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