

Better Access to Quality Eye Care

Nebraska's Doctors of Optometry

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

July 26, 2017

Media Contact:

Dan Parsons

(402) 580-2321

dan@parsonsinc.net

Back-to-School Eye Exams Essential to Helping Children Succeed in the Classroom

*Nebraska Doctors of Optometry Encourage Making
Vision Exams an Annual Back-to-School Tradition*

Lincoln, NE — As the new school year approaches, parents are making sure their children are prepared with an annual physical, immunizations and back-to-school shopping, but an annual eye exam should also be part of a student's back-to-school routine.

"Eye exams performed by an eye doctor are the only way to diagnose eye and vision diseases and disorders in children," said Dr. Teri Geist representing the Nebraska Optometric Association (NOA). "Undiagnosed vision problems can impair learning and can cause vision loss and other issues that significantly impact a child's quality of life."

"Comprehensive eye exams are one of the most important investments a parent can make to help maximize their child's education and contribute to their overall health and well-being," added Dr. Geist.

According to the American Optometric Association's (AOA) American Eye-Q® survey, 89 percent of those surveyed incorrectly believe simple vision screenings, such as those occasionally offered at schools, are an effective way to detect vision problems. However, these screenings cannot detect potentially serious eye and overall health issues in children.

From ages 6 to 18, a child's vision can change frequently or unexpectedly which can lead to behavioral and attention issues in the classroom. This year, the NOA encourages parents to start the school year on a healthy note by making comprehensive eye exams a priority and maintaining proper eye health throughout the year.

The NOA reminds parents to keep these four eye health and safety tips in mind:

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1. **Know that pediatric eye exams are most likely covered by your health insurance plan:** Most health insurance plans, including those sold in health insurance marketplaces, cover comprehensive pediatric eye exams. In fact, 54 percent of people were unaware that the Affordable Care Act now defines a comprehensive eye exam as an essential benefit and cover this expense, including glasses for children, according to the AOA's American Eye-Q® survey.
2. **Look for indicators of eye health issues:** Common signals that your child may be experiencing a vision problem include covering one eye, holding reading materials close to the face, a short attention span and complaining of headaches or other discomfort.
3. **Prevent eye strain by monitoring use of digital devices:** Increased exposure to electronic devices in and out of the classroom can cause digital eye strain, including burning or itchy eyes, headaches, blurred vision and exhaustion. The AOA recommends following the 20-20-20 rule (taking a 20-second break, every 20 minutes and looking at something 20 feet away), blinking frequently and adjusting your child's computer screen to prevent glare can prevent discomfort.
4. **Wear proper eye protection for sports and outdoor activities:** Well-fitting, protective eyewear and quality sunglasses that offer UV protection are also critical to maintaining key visual skills for sports and preventing injuries.

“One in four school age children have a vision problem. Since eye and vision problems can become worse over time, early diagnosis and treatment are essential to optimize children's eye health and vision and to prevent future vision loss.” said Dr. Geist.

“Making a comprehensive eye exam a priority this year is one of the single most important investments you can make to your child's education and overall health. While schools typically offer basic vision screenings, a comprehensive eye exam is the only way to detect serious eye health issues.”

To find an optometrist in your area, or for additional information on children's vision and the importance of back-to-school eye exams, please visit Nebraska.aoa.org

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About the Nebraska Optometric Association (NOA):

The NOA represents over 240 doctors of optometry serving in more than 80 communities throughout the state. Doctors of Optometry (ODs) are the independent primary health care professionals for the eye. Optometrists examine, diagnose, treat, and manage disease, injuries, and disorders of the visual system, the eye, and associated structures as well as identify related systemic conditions affecting the eyes. Association members in Nebraska are also leading providers of pediatric vision care and offer two statewide public service programs to serve children. Learn more about both programs and other valuable eye care information on the Nebraska Optometric Association website at Nebraska.aoa.org.