

IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Parents Can Help Start a Successful School Year With Healthy Vision for Kids

Making Eye Health a Priority is One Way to Help Children See a Brighter Future

CHICAGO (July 20, 2012) – As many kids are gearing up to begin a new school year, Prevent Blindness America wants to encourage parents to add “get my child’s eyes checked” to their list of things to do. Having a child’s vision tested by an eyecare professional can help them towards greater success in the classroom since much of a child’s learning is done visually. Some students who have been diagnosed with learning disabilities may simply have a vision problem.

Prevent Blindness America, the nation’s oldest volunteer eye health and safety organization, has declared August as Children’s Eye Health and Safety Awareness month in an effort to encourage parents to learn about ways they can help protect their child’s vision. Parents and caretakers are encouraged to visit preventblindness.org for free information on a variety of children’s vision health topics including eye conditions and eye safety.

Many children may not know that they have a problem because they think how they see is how everyone else sees. An eye exam is the ideal way for parents to know if their child has a vision problem. Parents should also watch for the following signs:

What do your child's eyes look like?

- Eyes don't line up, one eye appears crossed or looks outward
- Eyelids are red-rimmed, crusted or swollen
- Eyes are watery or red (inflamed)

How does your child act?

- rubs eyes a lot
- closes or covers one eye
- tilts head or thrusts head forward
- has trouble reading or doing other close-up work, or holds objects close to eyes to see
- blinks more than usual or seems cranky when doing close-up work
- squints eyes or frowns

What does your child say?

- "My eyes are itchy," "my eyes are burning" or "my eyes feel scratchy," "I can't see very well."

- After doing close-up work, your child says "I feel dizzy," "I have a headache" or "I feel sick/nauseous."
- "Everything looks blurry," or "I see double."

For eye conditions such as amblyopia, or "lazy eye," the earlier it is detected and treated, the greater the chance of preventing permanent vision loss. Amblyopia occurs when the brain and the eye are not working together effectively. As the brain develops and receives diminished images from the affected eye, it begins to suppress those images and favor the unaffected eye. If this condition persists without treatment, the weaker eye may become totally ineffective for vision.

In many cases, placing a patch over the unaffected eye is a common form of treatment for amblyopia, with the goal to strengthen the weaker eye over time. But compliance can be challenging for many children and their parents. [Prevent Blindness America's Eye Patch Club](#) is a program designed to encourage children to wear their eye patches as prescribed by their doctor. Among other materials, members of the club receive their own special calendar and stickers.

The stickers are placed on the calendar for each day the child wears his or her patch. Once the calendar is complete, the child may send it into Prevent Blindness America to receive a special prize. The Eye Patch Club kit may be purchased for \$12.95 with all proceeds going to Prevent Blindness America's sight-saving programs.

"Helping to protect children's eyes from unnecessary vision loss is what Prevent Blindness America was founded on more than 100 years ago," said Hugh R. Parry, president and CEO of Prevent Blindness America. "We want to work together with parents today to ensure all children are on the path to a lifetime of healthy vision."

For more information on children's eye health and safety, local financial resources for eyecare, or to sign up for The Eye Patch Club, please call Prevent Blindness America at (800) 331-2020 or visit preventblindness.org.

About Prevent Blindness America

Founded in 1908, Prevent Blindness America is the nation's leading volunteer eye health and safety organization dedicated to fighting blindness and saving sight. Focused on promoting a continuum of vision care, Prevent Blindness America touches the lives of millions of people each year through public and professional education, advocacy, certified vision screening and training, community and patient service programs and research. These services are made possible through the generous support of the American public. Together with a network of affiliates, Prevent Blindness America is committed to eliminating preventable blindness in America. For more information, or to make a contribution to the sight-saving fund, call 1-800-331-2020. Or, visit us on the Web at preventblindness.org or facebook.com/preventblindness.

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