

# ECOO NEWS



**#LoveYourEyes**  
**#LoveYourChildrensEyes**

Good eye care plays a critical role in a child's development, learning attainment and social interactions.

It is important to detect and address any vision problems in children as early as possible - this can help prevent long term visual impairment and enables every child to learn and develop to the best of their potential.

**We all have a responsibility to make sure children's eyesight is given priority and that they are provided with the eye care services they need.**

All children should have regular eye examinations - ideally before they start school, and then as recommended by an eye care practitioner.

Children should be encouraged to have a balance of activities. Screen time should be limited to avoid digital eye strain and children should be encouraged to play outdoors.

A child often won't know they have vision problems, so look out for symptoms such as squinting, frequently rubbing their eyes, headaches, difficulty or unwillingness to read.

If you have a family history of needing glasses or having eye problems, or if you have any concerns, get your child's eyes tested.

Teach children the importance of good hygiene to help look after their eyes. For example not to touch their eyes with dirty hands, the importance of washing hands regularly.

Make sure children have and wear spectacles or contact lenses if they are prescribed them.

✓ **With the support of parents, guardians and teachers we can inspire millions of young people everywhere to take care of their eyes.**

## WORLD SIGHT DAY 2024: TAKING CARE OF CHILDREN'S VISION

This year the annual World Sight Day #LoveYourEyes campaign is focussed on children.

Good eye care can play a critical role in a child's development, learning attainment and social interactions. Preventing or addressing visual impairment enables every child to learn and develop to the best of their potential. This is why it is so important to detect and address any vision problems in children as early as possible.

The first step is to make sure that all children have regular eye examinations. Ideally they should have their first eye examination before they start school, and then as recommended by their eye care practitioner. This is particularly

important if there is a family history of needing eyewear or having eye problems.

In most cases, if a child does have a problem with their vision, it can be easily resolved by prescribing and supplying spectacles. But early detection also enables certain abnormalities in children's vision to be treated. For example, early identification and treatment of vision issues like amblyopia and strabismus, and myopia, hyperopia, and astigmatism can prevent long-term visual impairment and optimise visual potential.

A child is very unlikely to know that they have vision problems. Unless there is a sudden change in their vision, they will think that what they can or cannot see is normal. This is why an eye examination with an eye care professional is important. But as well as making sure their child has regular eye examinations, parents

and teachers should be aware of and look out for possible symptoms of a problem. A child squint, frequently rubbing his or her eyes or complaining of headaches are some of the more obvious signs. It is also important to be aware that a child who finds reading difficult, or is unwilling to read, or who is bored or disruptive in the classroom may simply not be able to see the book, screen or what the teacher is showing them.

There are many steps that parents, carers and teachers can take to help support good eye health:

- Children should be encouraged to take part in a variety of different activities. There is evidence that encouraging children to play outdoors supports eye health, and there is a consensus that screen time should be limited to avoid digital eye strain.
- Good hygiene is important to prevent eye infections. Children should be taught not to touch their eyes with dirty hands and the importance of washing their hands regularly.
- Diet also plays an important part in good eye health, so make sure that children have a balanced diet.

And of course, when a child has been prescribed spectacles or contact lenses, it is important to make sure that they have them and that they wear them. We have moved on from the days when children were embarrassed or uncomfortable about having to wear glasses – and there is a huge choice available specially for children.

Which all leads to our final point: eye care services should be accessible for all, regardless of income, and especially for children. Health authorities must ensure that eye examinations are available for all children. And when a child needs spectacles, contact lenses or another treatment, that should be available as part of state or insurance funded eye care.

We all have a responsibility to make sure children's eyesight is given priority and that they are provided with the eye care services they need. With the support of health authorities, parents, guardians and teachers we can inspire millions of young people everywhere to take care of their eyes.

ECCOO has produced a new infographic, encouraging people to #LoveYourChildrensEyes which you can [download here](#).



## ABOUT ECOO

The European Council of Optometry and Optics (ECOO) represents the interests of optometrists and opticians across Europe. Our members are national professional associations from 25 countries who together represent more than 200,000 opticians and optometrists. ECOO aims to promote eye health to the public across borders and to harmonise clinical and educational standards of optometric and optical practice throughout Europe.