

Vision problems can harm kids' development, grades

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(HealthDay)—Poor eyesight can make life harder for people at any age,

but it can really take a toll on children's school performance and well-being, vision experts say.

If left untreated, certain eye-related conditions can lead to developmental delays, learning issues and [vision](#) loss, warned specialists from the National Center for Children's Vision and Eye Health at Prevent Blindness.

"The good news is that many vision problems in children can be treated successfully if detected early," Hugh Parry, president and CEO of Prevent Blindness, said in a news release from the organization. Prevent Blindness is the oldest nonprofit [eye health](#) and safety group in the United States.

Vision problems affect more than one in 20 preschoolers and one-quarter of school-aged children, the eye experts said.

The group urges parents and guardians to have children receive routine vision screening even if they aren't experiencing any [vision problems](#). If children show any signs of eye trouble, they should undergo a comprehensive eye exam by an optometrist or an ophthalmologist.

Children usually don't complain about their vision, the group pointed out. But they might have nearsightedness (myopia), which is trouble seeing things at a distance. Kids could also have farsightedness (hyperopia), which is trouble seeing things at close range. There are also more serious eye conditions, including:

- **Amblyopia, or "lazy eye".**— This is the leading cause of vision loss among kids. In most cases, children's eyes are not aligned properly or one eye doesn't focus as well as the other. Typically, one eye becomes stronger than the other, causing the brain to disregard the image of the weaker eye. If left untreated, the

weaker eye may suffer vision loss that can't be corrected. About 2 percent of children between the ages of 6 months and 6 years have amblyopia.

- **Strabismus, or "crossed eyes".**—This occurs when the eyes' muscles do not align and work together properly. Up to 4 percent of young children have strabismus. If left untreated, this disorder can lead to amblyopia and [vision loss](#).
- **Astigmatism.**—This occurs if the eye's cornea or lens has an irregular shape. If not corrected, it can cause blurry vision at any distance. Up to 28 percent of [children](#) aged 5 to 17 have astigmatism. The condition is more common among kids who are nearsighted or farsighted, the eye experts said.

More information: SOURCE: Prevent Blindness, news release, July 20, 2017

The American Academy of Ophthalmology has more about [eye screening for children](#).

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