

School-based vision screening programs found 1 in 10 kids had vision problems

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A school-based vision screening program in kindergarten, shown to be effective at identifying untreated vision problems in 1 in 10 students, could be useful to implement widely in diverse communities, according to new research in *CMAJ (Canadian Medical Association Journal)*.

Vision problems can lead to amblyopia (known as "lazy eye") and potential learning problems.

"These are practical details needed by funders to make decisions about implementing school-based [vision screening](#)," writes Dr. Mayu Nishimura, Department of Psychology, Neuroscience & Behaviour, McMaster University, Hamilton, and Department of Ophthalmology and Vision Sciences, The Hospital for Sick Children (SickKids), Toronto, with coauthors.

Researchers offered [vision](#) screening to 5884 children in junior and senior kindergarten at 43 schools in 15 Ontario communities from October 2015 to June 2017. Most children participated, and just under half of participants were referred for follow-up eye exams. More than 10% of children (516) who were screened were found to have a visual problem during the follow-up eye exam. For 67% of the children found to have a visual problem, this was their first eye exam. Amblyopia was found in 164 children (3.4%), and 458 (9.5%) children were prescribed glasses.

"These numbers show that the status quo (in 2015-2017) was insufficient

in identifying and treating young children with a visual problem before grade 1. The willingness of school boards and principals to participate in our study underlines the recognized need for better access to visual health care for children in kindergarten," write the authors.

Adequate follow-up care, such as visits to eye care professionals, prescriptions for glasses, appointment reminders and information about the importance of treatment, are critical to ensure the success of a vision screening program.

"Feasibility of a school-based vision screening program to detect undiagnosed visual problems in kindergarten [children](#) in Ontario" is published July 20, 2020.

More information: Feasibility of a school-based vision screening program to detect undiagnosed visual problems in kindergarten children in Ontario, *CMAJ* July 20, 2020. [DOI: 10.1503/cmaj.191085](https://doi.org/10.1503/cmaj.191085)

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