



PRESS RELEASE

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Undiagnosed eye conditions can ‘severely impair’ a child’s education and wellbeing

Sight loss risk rises as confusion reigns around children’s eye care

CHILDREN with undiagnosed eye health conditions may face ‘severe’ consequences for their education and wellbeing, experts at leading high-street opticians Specsavers have warned.

This comes as new research shows over two fifths of parents say their children haven’t had a test at an opticians in the recommended last two years (41%)¹.

The data has been released to mark the second annual National Children’s Eye Health Week [[Scottish/ UK date](#)], an initiative spearheaded by Specsavers to help dispel the confusion around children’s eye care.

The YouGov poll of parents of children aged 18 and under found that more than 30 per cent of parents say their children have never had an eye test at an opticians, with reasons including parents thinking there was nothing wrong with their eyes (44 per cent) or that their children were too young (41 per cent).

This is despite the recommended age for a first eye test being three years old – and that some eye conditions that can be spotted during a test show no symptoms at all.

Michelle Doyle Wildman, Acting CEO of PTA UK says: ‘Children’s eye health is essential to helping them develop. Although clear vision is obviously important to education, there can be a wider impact on everything from sport to social engagement. The signs of sight loss are hard to spot, so it’s important that we use the research conducted this Children’s Eye Health Week to remind parents and teachers of the importance of regular eye checks.’

Recent research has shown that myopia in children is on the increaseⁱⁱ, more than doubling in the last 50 years.

With some experts claiming excessive up close work – watching TV, using PCs, tablets and mobiles – could be contributing to this increaseⁱⁱⁱ, only half of parents would limit screen use after being told it could cause visual issues (55%).

This is despite nearly three fifths of parents admitting they worry about the impact technology could be having on their child's sight (57%).

Dr Josie Forte, Specsavers clinical spokesperson says: 'Early detection of any sight issues is critical. Between the ages of three and eight there is a real window of opportunity to identify and treat conditions such as myopia and lazy eye, which can have no outward symptoms.

'Undiagnosed conditions such as myopia, or short sightedness, can severely impair education and general wellbeing.

'While there is still no concrete evidence as to the negative effects of technology on eyesight, it is telling that so many parents think it could be a contributing factor.

'With that in mind, there is no reason to wait for something noticeably wrong before taking your child for a sight test – do it today.'

Presenter Rochelle Humes, National Children's Eye Health Week ambassador says: 'As a mum myself I was shocked to learn so many parents haven't taken their children for an eye test. My daughter actually really enjoyed hers, there's nothing to be frightened of so no excuse not to take the test.'

To support National Children's Eye Health Week, participating Specsavers stores nationwide are contacting local schools to offer SchoolScreener EZ software free of charge. The software is unique in being suitable for use with children as they progress through schooling up to age 18 and includes a colour vision test.

SchoolScreener EZ, created by Thomson Screening, has been designed to be operated by teachers or classroom assistants. It has 45 different language options. Schools can register to receive their free kit at screeningforschools.com. More than 2,000 primary and secondary schools have registered and received the software to date.

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Issued by Beattie Communications on behalf of Specsavers

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Notes to Editors

- Specsavers is a partnership of almost 2,000 locally-run businesses throughout the world -all committed to delivering high quality, affordable optical and hearing care in the communities they serve.
- Each store is part-owned and managed by its own joint venture partners who are supported by key specialists in support offices
- More than 36 million customers are registered with Specsavers and the partnership had a turnover of more than £2.2bn in 2016/17
- More than one in three people who wear glasses in the UK buy them from Specsavers
- Specsavers is a champion of the National Health Service – of its 22.2m customers in the UK, 55% are from the NHS and the company is the largest provider of free NHS digital hearing aids
- Specsavers supports several UK charities and is in partnership with RNIB for a public awareness campaign to transform the nation's eye health.
- Specsavers runs a home-visiting service in the UK and Ireland called Specsavers Healthcall for those who cannot get to their local store unaccompanied.

ⁱ All figures, unless otherwise stated, are from YouGov Plc. Total sample size was 4863 adults, of which 1,065 were parents of children aged 18 & under. Fieldwork was undertaken between 22nd – 24th August 2017. The survey was carried out online. The figures have been weighted and are representative of all UK adults (aged 18+).

ⁱⁱ Northern Ireland Childhood Errors of Refraction (NICER) study, The College of Optometrists and Ulster University

ⁱⁱⁱ American Optometric Association, August 2017