

BETTER VISION FOR CHILDREN: A public health imperative

Vision disorders are a common health problem for children in Canada, experienced by one in four school-age children.¹ The early detection and treatment of eye conditions and vision problems among children should be a public health imperative in Canada. The two most common children's eye conditions are:

- **Amblyopia (lazy eye)**
- **Strabismus (cross-eyes)**



VISION and learning go hand in hand

Vision affects every aspect of a child's learning, including reading, writing, participating in classroom activities and sports, and maintaining attention and concentration.²

In fact, 88% of Canadian adults with a visual impairment identify their educational experiences were directly impacted by their sight, which has in turn impacted educational attainment, career choices and employment.³

If a child cannot see properly, this may result in irreversible loss of vision in one or both eyes and put their learning potential at risk. Early identification and treatment of vision problems are critical for eye health in children.⁴ A comprehensive eye exam is the only way to achieve early diagnosis and prevent years of needless suffering among children who need their vision to learn.⁵



SWIFT ACTION REQUIRED to address eye health and vision loss among children

- Build a pan-Canadian Framework for Action, coordinated by a Vision Desk at PHAC, that:
 - Is patient-centered and ensures access to the right eye health provider at the right time.
 - Promotes national vision health guidelines including an annual, comprehensive in person eye exam for children, particularly before entering school.
 - Addresses access to eyeglasses and other corrective treatments for underserved populations.
 - Includes eye health as an essential aspect of effective learning strategies.
 - Approaches eye health as a population health priority, and encourages its integration into children's preventive health care routine.
- Educate the public by promoting the value of comprehensive eye exams to prevent vision loss and promote eye health through a public awareness campaign.
- Fund research on healthy children's vision programs.

REFERENCES >

