

A head start on learning begins with a comprehensive eye exam

OTTAWA, October 1, 2019 – Good vision provides a head start for learning, so during Children’s Vision Month, the Canadian Association of Optometrists (CAO) is encouraging parents to help improve their child’s school success with a visit to their optometrist for a comprehensive eye exam.

Visual impairment in children is associated with developmental delays and the need for special education, vocational and social services, often beyond childhood.¹ 88% of Canadian adults with a visual impairment indicate that their educational experiences were directly impacted by their sight, which in turn impacted educational attainment, career choices and employment.²

During an eye exam, an optometrist will assess eye movement and coordination, focusing ability, and help detect nearsightedness, farsightedness and astigmatism. The exam provides an opportunity to identify and treat vision issues, before the most common childhood vision issues - amblyopia and strabismus - become more serious.

“CAO believes that a child should see an optometrist before they enter school, and then on an annual basis. The comprehensive eye exam helps to ensure that a child who cannot see properly gets treatment as early as possible, ensuring that poor vision doesn’t lead to poor academic performance,” said Dr. Michael Nelson, CAO President.

Children don’t always realize they are experiencing vision problems, so it is important to watch for signs that they are struggling, including frequent headaches, squinting or tilting their head while reading or watching television, excessive blinking or complaining of tearing, itchy or burning eyes.

Parents can also help set their children up for overall success by limiting screen time. High screen time use in children can result in delays in critical cognition, learning and social skills in younger children. Screen time should be limited to zero for infants and toddlers up to two years of age, no more than one hour per day for preschool children and ideally no more than two hours per day for school aged children.

Set your child up for success and visit your optometrist today!

-30-

About the Canadian Association of Optometrists

The Canadian Association of Optometrists (CAO) is the national voice of optometry, dedicated to collaboratively advancing the highest standard of primary eye care through the promotion of optimal eye health and vision care. For more information, go to opto.ca.

Media contact: Rhona Lahey / Director, Communications and Marketing / 613-235-7924, x. 213 / rlahey@opto.ca

¹ Piquette N, Boulet C. Visual impediments to learning. *Optom Vis Perf*, 2013; 1(4), 118–28.

² Bizier, C. Contreras, R. and Walpole, A. (2016). Seeing disabilities among Canadians aged 15 years and older, 2012. Canadian Survey on Disability, 2012. Statistics Canada.