

Ophthalmologists Urge Eye Exams For Children

Raleigh, N.C.--In just a matter of days, it's back to school, back to books and back to eyes at work for thousands of North Carolina children.

The N.C. Society of Ophthalmology urges parents to include an eye examination in their children's schedule for the busy year ahead.

Eye problems are not restricted to any one age according to the group of over 250 medical doctors specializing in eye care. Over 400,00 preschoolers, nearly one out of every twenty children, suffer some type of eye disorder.

"A young child should have a preschool eye examination by a primary care physician, and we recommend that a child's eyes be examined by a medical eye doctor before the age of six," said Dr. R. Jeffrey Board, a Raleigh ophthalmologist specializing in children's eye care.

According to Dr. Board, the most important aspect of treating vision disorders is early diagnosis and treatment by an eye care professional. "Children do not outgrow eye problems," he said. "Home remedies such as diet, megavitamins and eye exercise do not improve a child's vision."

Many children may not be aware that their vision is less than perfect. "Children often cannot tell you if they are seeing correctly; they may have become accustomed to a blurred or distorted vision of the world," the ophthalmologist said.

Eye muscle imbalance causing misalignment of the eyes (strabismus) is the most serious eye disorder afflicting children. If an eye is crossed inward or wanders outward, physicians say it may lead to amblyopia (lazy eye). In amblyopia, one eye is favored over the other, causing loss of vision in the weak eye.

Strabismus is treated by glasses or surgery. The treatment for amblyopia is to patch the good eye thus forcing use of the lazy eye.

There are several other causes of amblyopia and all can result in permanent loss of vision if left untreated. Dr. Board said treatment is usually quite effective if started early - before the age of six.

Although myopia (nearsightedness) may develop at any age, it is often discovered in children from third to sixth grades when glasses are needed to see the blackboard. Glasses, rather than contact lenses, are recommended at this age because of the care contact lenses require.

Dr. E. Randolph Wilkerson, a pediatric ophthalmologist in Charlotte, offered parents advice about helping nervous children feel more comfortable with wearing glasses. "Proper preparation is the key. It's very important to explain to the child that wearing glasses will help him or her see better and learn better in school," said Dr. Wilkerson.

The ophthalmologist also suggested that children have an active role in selecting the frames they will wear. "Children who are made to feel special and grown-up because they wear glasses are more apt to wear them regularly," said Dr. Wilkerson.

Parents should be extra careful when selecting eyeglasses for children who play contact sports or sports involving small balls, such as racquetball, handball or baseball.

Dr. Wilkerson recommended purchasing impact-resistant plastic lenses and frames with flexible hinges and a properly fitting bridge for very active youngsters. Extended warranty on the glasses is extremely important. "A child's eyeglasses should be designed to absorb the shock of being struck by a fast-moving object, such as a playground ball. Otherwise, the frame or lenses might break and cut the child's face and eyes," the ophthalmologist said.

While Dr. Wilkerson commended schools and PTAs for their vision screening programs, he said such tests do not replace the need for periodic more complete visual testing by a medical doctor.

Signs of vision problems include excessive blinking, red, watery, or swollen eyes, a tendency to squint or close one eye, complaints of pain in and around the eyes and sensitivity to bright light.

"There are certain stages in a child's development--birth, six months, three years of age and preschool--when a medical eye examination is particularly important to check conditions that can lead to severe vision damage or even blindness," said Dr. Wilkerson. "Older children should be referred for thorough ophthalmologic evaluation when familial, genetic, or epidemiologic problems are felt to indicate particularly high risk in that child."

Weyerhaeuser News

The following Weyerhaeuser Company employees from this area have earned service awards this month: with 20 years service, Charles D. Hill of Kinston; with 15 years service: Earl A. Blango of New Bern; Donnie W. King of Grifton; Gerald K. Morris of Vanceboro, and Richard W. Voliva of Snow Hill in the New Bern Pulp Mill Group. With 10 years service: Daniel L. Harding and Edward H. Johnson of New Bern, also in the New Bern Pulp Mill Group.

WTEB -FM News

NEW BERN-WTEB-FM is airing a new classical program locally produced by a New Bern native and will be heard on other public radio stations as well.

The program is called "Not After Beethoven" and will be aired Monday through Thursday from 10 p.m. to 11 p.m. The program begins August 4. R. Lawton Blandford Jr., produces the program as well as hosts the program.

He will feature music written only before Beethoven's death in 1827. "We'll play a good bit of Bach, Mozart, Haydn, and Beethoven with some rather obscure baroque composers thrown in for good measure," Blandford said. The music is most suited for the later evening hours.

Blandford's love of classical music started when he was in the eighth grade at St. Paul school in New Bern. "I took one of my father's albums, Beethoven's Symphony No. 3, and I played the third movement over and over. Each time I heard it, I heard something different and I became an instant lover of Beethoven. He is my favorite composer, he said.

Blandford was the program director at the radio station at the Belmont Abbey College; he has also served as volunteer for the public radio station in Charlotte, WFAE, for two years as a classical music announcer.

Blandford will be leaving shortly for a new job in Bristol, Va. where he will work as director of admissions at Virginia Intermont College. The public radio station in Johnson City, Tenn. WETS will also air "Not After Beethoven." WTEB serves 17 counties in Eastern North Carolina.

Musician to be Awarded

Governor's Award to be Presented

Raleigh --- International recording artist Stevie Wonder will be honored for his efforts to prevent young people from drinking and driving.

An official of the Governor's Highway Safety Program (GHSP) will present the special Governor's Award to Wonder at a 7p.m. press conference on Friday, August 22. Wonder will receive the award during his first appearance at the Greensboro Coliseum.

The Governor's Award cites Wonder's role in the state and

national fight against drunken driving. Wonder has been committed to the fight through his music, talent and dedication to American youth.

Noting that North Carolina has seen an increase in the number of individuals interested in preventing DWI arrests, Governor Jim Martin commented, "Stevie Wonder's interest in our youth has obviously inspired a growing commitment from citizens of North Carolina and our nation to become involved with this prevention campaign.

"I sincerely appreciate his commendable effort. Our youth are our future resources. We must take every imaginable step to prevent those resources from being destroyed."



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