

The school years are an important period in a child's life. During this time, children are introduced to the world of learning and they begin to acquire vital social skills.

Development in both these areas can be inhibited, however, if a child's vision or hearing is impaired.

That is why it is so important for children to be screened regularly for vision and hearing loss.

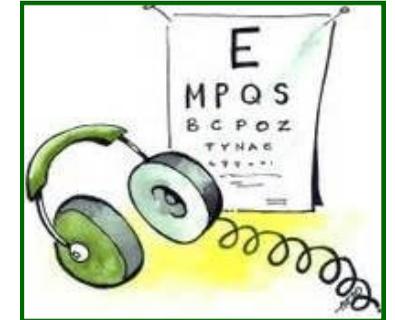
Screenings

Vision and hearing screenings are conducted by your local health department and your local school district. If you would like further information about vision and hearing screenings, contact your local school superintendent or the

**McHenry County Department of Health
Community Health Program
2200 N Seminary Avenue
Woodstock, IL 60098**

Phone: (815)334-4507 or (815)334-4516
E-mail: cbseemann@co.mchenry.il.us
dlcase@co.mchenry.il.us

Children may be excused from screenings on religious grounds. In these instances, the reasons must be submitted in writing to the local school district by the child's parents or legal guardians.



Sights and Sounds

Vision and Hearing Screening for Children



Vision Screening

Parents cannot always tell if their children have vision problems. Vision screening can detect some of these problems early. When eye defects are found and treated promptly, eye strain and permanent loss of eyesight may be prevented.

Vision screening is divided into three tests:

- Sharpness of vision (visual acuity);
- Farsightedness (hyperopia);
- Muscle balance (eyes' ability to work together).

Preschool children and those in kindergarten are screened for visual acuity only.

The certified screening technician administering these tests will note observable signs or symptoms of possible vision problems.

If your child does not pass the screening, a rescreening will be given to double check the initial results. If your child does not pass the rescreening, you will be notified and asked to arrange for your child to have a professional eye examination. Prompt eye care may minimize the effects of a suspected vision problem.

Do You Know the Difference?

- An **ophthalmologist** is a licensed physician (M.D.) who specializes in the diagnosis and treatment of defects and diseases of the eye, performs surgery when necessary, and prescribes other types of treatment, including glasses.
- An **optometrist** is a licensed specialist (O.D.) trained in the art and science of vision care. He or she performs eye examinations and helps preserve and restore vision by prescribing corrective lenses or exercises.
- An **optician** grinds lenses, fits them into frames

If your child passes the vision screening, DO NOT assume he or she does not need an eye examination. VISION SCREENING IS NOT A SUBSTITUTE FOR REGULAR PROFESSIONAL EXAMINATIONS BY AN EYE DOCTOR.

Regular eye check-ups are recommended for all persons.

ABCs of Eye Problems

Appearance

Do the eyes look normal? Any of the following conditions may indicate a problem:

- Eye turns in or out
- Crusty or red eyelids
- Drooping lids
- Different sized pupils or eyes
- Swelling of eyelids
- Conjunctivitis ("pinkeye")

Behavior

Teachers and parents should watch closely for the following kinds of actions and responses:

- Tilting the head or covering one eye when reading or performing complex tasks
- Difficulty in keeping place while reading ("finger reader")
- Reluctance to become involved in tasks or activities that require acute vision
- Rubbing eyes or frowning when reading or involved in tasks or activities requiring acute vision
- Excessive stumbling, awkwardness or day-dreaming
- Holding printed material in unusual positions

Complaints

Pay close attention to a child when he or she complains about any of the following:

- Cannot see the chalkboard
- Eyes hurt or blur while reading
- Headaches when reading
- Words move or jump around when reading
- Double vision
- Any eye problem after a blow to the head

Hearing Screening

"I know Johnny hears," parents or teachers may say. "He turns toward me when I talk, and I don't have to shout at him." Yet, Johnny could have a hearing problem that is going unnoticed. Screenings are an important way to help assure that hearing losses are detected and treated early.

Children may hear words, but only with difficulty. Certain sounds may not be clear or may be hard to distinguish. Your child should be able to hear clearly all the sounds that make up words. Otherwise, a part of the word may be heard, while another part is missed. This can make comprehension troublesome.

Several different sounds are used during a hearing screening test. If a child did not hear all of the sounds, he or she will be retested within two weeks.

Not all children who fail the screening test have a hearing loss. For this reason, a child who does not pass the first screening test is rescreened later. If the child does not pass again, he or she is given a more detailed "threshold test" that shows the suspected amount of hearing loss.

If the threshold test indicates your child may have a problem, you will be notified by your local health department or school and advised to take your child to a physician. This can be your family doctor or a physician who specializes in ear, nose and throat (ENT) problems. The sooner your child is seen by a physician, the more likely the difficulty can be corrected and serious problems avoided.

Warning Signs

If your child exhibits any of the following behaviors, he or she may have a hearing loss or an ear problem and should be referred to the school's audiologist for a complete hearing test. You also may want to contact your family physician or an ear, nose and throat specialist.

- Fails to respond, or responds slowly, to questions
- Says "huh" or "what" often and needs questions or words repeated
- Has problem with speech or language
- Has frequent ear infections, colds or allergies
- Shows frequent signs of inattentiveness
- Watches your face carefully when you are talking
- Complains of ringing or buzzing in the ears
- Complains of pain, fullness or itching in the ears
- Often pulls, rubs or scratches at the ears