



9th September 2009

POOR EYESIGHT POOR GRADES

'Eye Know Eye Care' schools campaign launched to combat parents' oversight

Up to 1 million children* in the UK will go back to school this autumn with an undetected vision problem that can interfere with their learning. Despite this disturbing figure, research commissioned by Transitions lenses, shows that 21% of parents have never taken their child to get their eyes tested**.

With free eye tests available on the NHS why are parents still not taking their children to the opticians? The Transitions lenses Eye Know Eye Care survey** reveals that 69% of parents didn't realise that they needed to take their children for annual check up's, with one in five saying that they had never been given any information about their child's eye care. It now falls to our schools to educate children and parents about eye health. As schools do not currently have a nationwide scheme to assess the vision of school age children, Transitions lenses are lending a helping hand by launching the Eye Know Eye Care campaign to help combat the problem.

EYES: THE ROOT OF ALL LEARNING

Visual learning accounts for 80% of the learning process, therefore poor eyesight can severely affect progress at school and this is leading to children being labelled as slow learners, dyslexic and disruptive. Eyesight problems could be a factor in 40% of children's learning difficulties***.

Karen Sparrow, from the Association of Optometrists comments "Most children don't realise that there is a problem and that everyone doesn't see the same as them which is why it is important to educate them from an early age. A child's vision is fully developed by the age of 8, so it is vital that the problems are detected early to avoid a lifelong visual handicap."

Crissy Duff, parent supporter at Netmums.com adds "If a child is underperforming at school it is important that parents and teachers take their vision into account. When children are sent to school they need to have the right tools at their disposal- pens, paper, text books and of course good eye sight."

BLIND TO THE FACTS?

Parents still remember their own experience at school being screened by the school nurse with reading charts and perhaps an assumption has been made that this is still standard practice. Unfortunately schools do not have a national eye screening programme, only a third of parents surveyed were aware of this and more than a third admitted to not even knowing if their child had been tested or not!

PARENTS CARE MORE ABOUT LOSING A TOOTH THAN AN EYE

Only 38%**** of children go to the optician every two years, compared with 92% who visit the dentist over the same time period. The Transitions lenses survey revealed that it was due to lack of information that parents were unaware that a trip to the optician was needed annually. Elaine Grisdale at the Association of British Dispensing Opticians comments "It's unfortunately not only a question of education, but also a question of habit. Nearly all adults go the dentist regularly so it is easy to take the kids along and have them checked at the same time. Not all parents go to the optician regularly unless they wear some sort of correction already that needs changing or they are experiencing problems. Unfortunately it's an unknown quantity for a lot of parents."

EYE KNOW EYE CARE

The Transitions Eye Know Eye Care campaign's website has free resources for teachers including activity sheets, competitions and fun packed lesson plans which have been mapped to the KS2 curriculum. In addition over 700 opticians will go into schools and talk to children about the importance of eye health. The initiative will make it possible for teachers and eye care professionals to address this problem by bringing eye health into the heart of the KS2 curriculum.

As the leading global provider of photochromic lenses for spectacles, Transitions lenses is committed to helping people achieve healthy sight. Introducing good eye health in children will help them to enjoy healthy sight for a lifetime.

Visit www.eyeknoweyecare.com for more information

-ENDS-

Editors Notes

* Statistics provided by Eye Care Trust and based on DCSF 2009 School Census 0-12 yr olds

** Research commissioned by Transitions lenses of 1,002 British Adults across the UK, August 2009

*** Journal of Intellectual Disability Research. 40(5):438-450, October 1996. "The health needs of adults with learning disabilities and the Health of the Nation strategy", Turner S, Moss S, Hester Adrian Research Centre, University of Manchester, England.

**** IPSOS report on Healthy Sight commissioned by Transitions lenses, April 2009

Additional Statistics

- Almost three quarters do not know that their child should be taken for regular eye tests
- Over one in five parents who do not take their children for regular eye test say they simply do not have the time
- Half of parents say they have received very little or no information at all regarding their child's eye care
- A child's vision is fully developed by the age of 8. So it's vital that problems are detected early to avoid a lifelong visual handicap
- More than a quarter don't know that slower learning is a potential side effect
- One in five don't know that headaches can also be a result
- A third of parents felt relieved when they found out their child needed glasses as it explained a number of problems

Free 'Eye Know Eye Care' resources can be found out www.eyeknoweyecare.com. The campaign is led by Transitions lenses and is endorsed by the Association of Optometrists and the Association of British Dispensing Opticians. Schools can sign up on the website and be offered a visit from a qualified optician who will talk to the children about the importance of looking after their eyes, what really happens in an eye exam and how to know if you have vision problems. Lesson plans available include:

- Science – what is glare and how will it affect my eyes; understanding colour and colour blindness;
- English – write a diary from the point of view of a blind person; write an article to encourage people to have their eyes tested;
- Maths/PE – understanding the importance of sight for accuracy in sport;
- PSHE – protecting our eyesight from UV and design a poster warning of the dangers of UV;
- Art – a competition to design a pair of 'Spectacular Spectacles'! The winner will get the chance to have their design made up for them into a pair of real glasses.

For further information, quotes and images please contact:
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