

As your child is about to turn 3.5 years old, it is now time for the next developmental assessment by your Maternal and Child Health nurse. We encourage you to attend this appointment because as part of the important assessment for your child's health and development, the nurse will test your child's eyesight.

It is important to test your child's vision at this age, as it can be difficult to know if children have any vision problems. For example, there may be normal vision in one eye but poor vision in the other with no obvious signs and your child may not complain. It is important to detect any problem early so the effective treatment is commenced early.

Most children of 3.5 years are able to perform the vision screening test. If you have any concerns about your child's vision or if your child does not respond well to the vision test, your Maternal and Child Health nurse may recall or refer your child for further assessment.

Whilst your child may pass this vision test, it must be remembered that it is only a screening test and cannot guarantee that every defect will be detected or that your child may not develop a vision defect at a later age. If at any stage in the future, you are concerned about your child's eyes, please contact your Maternal and Child Health nurse or family doctor.

If you have any further questions regarding the vision screening test, please ask your Maternal and Child Health nurse.

A referral to check your child's vision has been suggested as either:

- i) Your child has failed the vision screening test, or;
- ii) Your or your Maternal and Child Health nurse have concerns over your child's vision.

Suggested options are:

1. An **ophthalmologist**, an eye doctor who diagnoses and treats all aspects of eye problems. Referral to an ophthalmologist requires a referral from a general practitioner.
2. The **eye clinic** at a public city or country hospital eg Alfred Hospital, Austin Repatriation Hospital, Ballarat Base Hospital, Bendigo Base Hospital, Monash Medical Centre, Royal Children's Hospital, Royal Victorian Eye and Early Hospital. At these clinics your child will be examined by an ophthalmologist (eye doctor) and/or an orthoptist (specialist in testing children's vision and their eye movement). These are free services so take your Medicare card with you to this visit.
3. Your local **optometrist** is a primary eye care practitioner. Private optometrist addresses can be located in the telephone book, or information about optometrists with a special interest in children can be sought from the Optometrists Association of Australia (03) 9486 1700. A Children's Clinic exists at the Victorian College of Optometry in Carlton (03) 9349 7455. Medicare covers the costs of optometric service
4. An **orthoptist** is a specialist in testing children's vision and their eye movements. Private orthoptists' addresses are located the telephone book. They can also be contacted through the Orthoptic Association of Australia (03) 9521 844. Contact with the local orthoptist or with an orthoptist working with a private ophthalmologist may assist where there is a long wait for an ophthalmologist appointment. There is a fee for this service that is covered by your private health insurances if you have "Extras" cover.

Suggested referral to:

Name:

Address:

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Phone: