

Eyes are windows to more than a child's soul

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Nearly 80 percent of what children learn during their first 12 years is through their vision. Though vision problems may seem easy to identify, they actually can be difficult for parents to discern. Still, parents need to be attentive since vision disorders are the fourth-most-common disability in U.S. children.

"The symptoms of vision problems in young children can be very subtle. Often, it's not until they are in school that it starts to become apparent," said Dr. Eileen Gable, an eye specialist at Loyola University Health System.

Gable gives a few tips to help [parents](#) know what to look for:

Loses interest quickly. Children won't complain of blurry vision but will lose interest quickly because the visual activity is difficult.

Children will do what they need to do in order to see. Does your child:

- Turn his or her head or tilt it when looking at something?
- Sit with one eye covered?
- Change body position to see?

Changes in schoolwork or behavior at school. School-age children who can't see may act out in school or their grades may suffer. Parents should be in contact with their child's teacher to better assess a child's behavior.

"Teachers are a great resource and should work with parents to help determine if a child's behavior in school or difficulty with grades might be a response to a vision problem," Gable said.

To help discern if your child has a vision problem she suggests making sure your child is:

- Staying hydrated
- Eating a balanced diet
- Practicing good sleep habits

"Without these key healthy habits, [children](#) can have a hard time focusing and may have headaches or other issues that can mimic [vision problems](#)," Gable said. "The eye is controlled by muscles; it needs rest, proper nutrition and hydration, too."

If a parent or teacher suspects a child has a vision problem, Gable suggests seeking professional care from a pediatric or family eye health specialist so the child feels comfortable.

"Having a vision problem can be scary for a child. You want to ensure the physician you see can put the child at ease and be a helpful resource to parents and teachers," Gable said.

Provided by Loyola University Health System

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