

Vision Diagnoses in the Blink of an Eye

When a child can't see the world clearly, their development and learning abilities could be directly impacted. A [study](#) published in the National Library of Medicine found visual health had a direct correlation to academic performance. Children with poor visual health struggled academically compared to their peers without vision issues.

According to the [American Optometric Association](#), one in four school-age children has a vision disorder. While children are required to get an eye exam before entering kindergarten, Dr. Michal Endris, an OSF HealthCare pediatrician in Bloomington, Illinois says kids could benefit from vision screenings even earlier.

"Vision loss and vision deficits are one of the most common ailments in childhood, and oftentimes there are no symptoms, and screening is the best way to detect these problems," explains Dr. Endris.

The process of screening, however, can be a challenge; young children are not able to navigate eye charts or articulate vision issues they are experiencing. Dr. Endris says there is a simple solution, and all it takes is an iPhone. He and his Bloomington colleagues use a digital screening platform called [GoCheck Kids](#) for this purpose.

GoCheck Kids is a photoscreening test performed at the well-child visit. A photo of the child's eyes is taken using an iPhone with attached hardware. The GoCheck Kids technology then alerts the provider of any possible vision issues, sometimes in less than a minute.

"It can assess for differences in vision, whether that would be nearsightedness or farsightedness," Dr. Endris says. "It can estimate for weakness in one eye compared to the other, as well as look for things like a red reflex in the pupil. That can be a sign of a more serious underlying disease. And it can also check to see if our eyes are in alignment."

The most common vision abnormalities in children are nearsightedness, farsightedness, amblyopia (lazy eye) or astigmatism. Signs of eye health issues in kids can include frequent rubbing of the eyes, squinting, tilting or turning of the head to look at objects, or noticeable wandering eyes.

Dr. Endris continues, "If our automatic read from this device picks up on any issue at all, it is then reviewed by an ophthalmologist, which is a medical doctor who specializes in the eye. If they concur and see that there is some abnormality present, then we would start a referral."

Dr. Endris and his team have used this technology for nearly a year and provide vision screenings for kids as young as 12 months old. He says early detection of vision abnormalities can make a huge impact on a child's development, physically, academically and emotionally.

"Vision problems are common and we know that, in general, it's better to treat them earlier than later. We know that not only is it important for the success of academics, but also kids that have amblyopia have recently been found to have a higher incidence of anxiety and depression. Whether that's truly from their vision or not, we'll see. But again, it's ever so critical to screen for these, both by asking parents questions about their child's vision as well as using a photo screen or device," urges Dr. Endris.

If you notice your child struggling with vision issues contact their pediatrician or a pediatric optometrist. If you don't have a pediatrician visit [osfhealthcare.org](https://www.osfhealthcare.org) to find one near you.