Vision Screening vs. Vision Examinations

Vision screening programs are intended to help identify children with eye or vision problems that threaten their sight or impair their ability to develop and learn normally. As with any screening program, false positive and false negative results are a possibility. Vision screenings are not meant to diagnose an eye or vision problem; they are only a first step to determine if further evaluation is needed, and an imperfect one at that.

Furthermore vision screenings often test for visual acuity only. Use of the Snellen chart alone – the eye chart with succeeding rows of letters of decreasing size – only identifies five percent of vision problems in children, according to the American Foundation for Vision Awareness. A child may be able to see letters 20 feet away but the chart does not reveal whether his eyes are able to work together to read materials 12 inches away, or if there is a problem with the health of the eye or vision perception.

Furthermore, according to a study published by the American Academy of Pediatrics, vision screenings were not even attempted on more than 60 percent of the three-year old children in pediatricians’ offices. They found that in general, the younger the child, the less likely it was that a vision screening was attempted.

The prevalence of vision disorders present in pre-school age children and the limitations of vision screening programs highlight the need for, and value of, comprehensive eye and vision exams beginning early in life. Regular visits to a qualified eye doctor are the best way to detect eye health and vision problems. InfantSee is a free program that offers comprehensive visual examinations for infants 12 months and younger. Dr. Griffith is a provider for this program; please call to schedule your infant for this assessment.
Hay Fever or Dust Conjunctivitis

Conjunctivitis is an inflammation of the conjunctiva, the thin, transparent mucous membrane draped over the eye. Conjunctivitis is commonly called “pink eye.” Plant pollen, house dust and animal dander may trigger a reaction in sensitive eyes and people. The reaction usually starts a short time after exposure, and may include tearing, itching and swelling. Symptoms may be worse at the end of the day.

Giant Papillary Conjunctivitis

Contact lens wearers know this allergy more commonly as GPC. The causes of GPC include improper cleaning or infrequent replacement of contact lenses, or wearing contacts for too many hours. Because GPC is an allergic reaction it is difficult to predict who might develop it, but those with asthma, hay fever or animal allergies are at higher risk. GPC may occur after months or even years of contact lens wear without problems.

Symptoms may include itchy eyes after removing your lenses, mucus discharge, particularly in the morning, sensitivity to light and uncomfortable lens wear. Your vision may become blurred as allergic bumps form on the inside of the upper eyelid, interfering with the wearing of contact lenses. GPC requires proper diagnosis and treatment.

Contact Dermatitis

Allergic contact dermatitis occurs when you come into contact with something that irritates your skin. The eyelids and conjunctiva are very sensitive. Signs of this reaction include swelling, redness, scaly skin and blistering. Symptoms are pain and itching. The reaction usually develops about 12 to 72 hours after exposure to the irritant.

Recommendations to Reduce Allergic Reactions

- Avoid exposure to allergens
- Maintain contact lens integrity by cleaning and replacing lenses as prescribed
- Reduce irritation with proper eyelid and eyelash hygiene
- Control dryness with artificial tear drops, proper hydration and supplements
- Begin prescription allergy drops at the first signs of a reaction
- Soothe eyes with cold compresses and chilled sterile saline eye rinses

If itchy, red eyes are making you miserable, or if you are experiencing any of the above symptoms, call Westside Optometry for an appointment and relief.

Your Eyes and Allergies

Your eyes can develop allergic reactions just like your body does — and at any time in your life. You may suddenly experience symptoms such as itching, burning and watering eyes. Here is a look at three of the most common ocular allergies and their symptoms.

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