



For Release: IMMEDIATE

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**Back to School After the COVID Year?
Georgia's Doctors of Optometry Say
Back-in-School Checklist Should Include Trip to Eye Doctor
One in Four Vision Problems in Children Go Undetected, Study Says**

ATLANTA, Ga. (August 2021) – Many Georgia children are back in school now after an unprecedented year where distance learning with digital devices was the norm. Since normal routines have been thrown off, thousands of parents may have skipped a back-to-school tradition that helps their young learner achieve academic success – a visit to the eye doctor for a comprehensive eye exam.

“Some Georgia students haven’t been inside a classroom for months,” said Dr. Darrell Sorah, president of the Georgia Optometric Association. “Prior to the pandemic, changes in vision quality may have been more obvious in a classroom setting. Now that students are back to in-person classes, those problems overlooked during remote learning may be more noticeable and certainly deserve immediate attention.”

Many experts believe that approximately 80 percent of learning comes through a child's eyes. Due to the important link between vision and learning, Georgia’s doctors of optometry, members of the Georgia Optometric Association, are urging Georgia parents to make sure they schedule a comprehensive eye exam for their young learners.

According to a Vision Council of America study, one in four children has an undetected vision problem meaning comprehensive eye exams are one of the most important investments a parent can make to help maximize their child’s education and contribute to overall health and well-being.

Helpful Tips

- + Eye experts say the earlier a vision problem is detected and treated, the more likely it is that treatment will be successful. A school vision screening, while helpful, is not a substitute for a comprehensive eye examination. Vision screenings are not diagnostic and, consequently, do not necessarily lead to correction of problems. In reality, screenings only indicate a potential need for further care and they miss problems in many children.
- + Schedule an appointment with a practice that uses live, in person doctors of optometry and then select a doctor of optometry for your eye exam. Apps are good for games, but not eye care. Some retail establishments purporting to provide low-cost eye exams do not actually use doctors to perform their telehealth exams. For best results, be in the same room with the doctor of optometry performing the comprehensive eye exam.
- + Watch your child when they read. If they experience any of the following, an optometrist should be consulted about a possible vision problem:

- Loses place while reading
- Avoids close work
- Tends to rub eyes
- Has headaches
- Turns or tilts head
- Makes frequent reversals when reading or writing
- Uses finger to maintain place when reading
- Omits or confuses small words when reading
- Consistently performs below potential
- Struggles to complete homework
- Squints while reading or watching television
- Has behavioral problems
- Holds reading material closer than normal

Early detection and treatment are key in correcting vision problems and helping children see clearly. The American Optometric Association recommends that a child's first eye assessment take place at six months of age. Comprehensive eye exams should be conducted beginning at age 3, before a child enters school, and then every two years, unless otherwise advised by an optometrist. In between exams, parents and teachers should monitor children for the more prevalent signs that a student's vision may be impaired.

For more information about the Georgia Optometric Association, or to find a local doctor of optometry in your area, please visit www.GOAeyes.com.

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The Georgia Optometric Association is a statewide professional organization representing over 700 doctors of optometry located in communities throughout the state of Georgia. Founded in 1904, the GOA and its members work to provide the public with quality vision and eye care services. For more information visit www.GOAeyes.com, [www.Facebook.com/GeorgiaOptometricAssociation](https://www.facebook.com/GeorgiaOptometricAssociation) or follow us on Twitter @GOA_eyes.