

Your Child's Healthy Vision From Birth to 3



Every aspect of your child's learning and development can be affected if they are not able to see well. This checklist of milestones can help you to make sure your infant or toddler is on track for their age. If they have difficulty with any of the skills — in and up to their age group — Vision Forward is here to help!

Visual Milestones for Infants and Toddlers

Age	Visual Skills
Birth to 1 Month	<input type="checkbox"/> Stares at lights or windows <input type="checkbox"/> Blinks when lights are too bright <input type="checkbox"/> Looks at faces or objects within 8 to 15 inches (may stop sucking or moving)
1 to 3 Months	<input type="checkbox"/> Makes eye contact with you and smiles back at you (without hearing your voice) <input type="checkbox"/> Watches their own hands <input type="checkbox"/> Follows moving lights, faces, and toys with eyes (both eyes not always moving together)
3 to 5 Months	<input type="checkbox"/> Holds and looks at objects in their hands (also brings to mouth) <input type="checkbox"/> Moves eyes from person to person and views objects at 3 feet <input type="checkbox"/> Looks at and accurately reaches for toys and faces within arm's reach
5 to 7 Months	<input type="checkbox"/> Both eyes are straight and always move together (one eye should not be turning in, out, up, or down) <input type="checkbox"/> Smiles, pats, or kisses their image in a mirror <input type="checkbox"/> Laughs and plays peek-a-boo games
7 to 12 Months	<input type="checkbox"/> Watches and imitates facial expressions <input type="checkbox"/> Looks at and points to/reaches for small items like pieces of cereal or pictures in a book <input type="checkbox"/> Follows objects with only eyes at near and far
12 to 18 Months	<input type="checkbox"/> Watches a favorite toy dropped into a container <input type="checkbox"/> Draws a line on paper with crayon <input type="checkbox"/> Turns pages and looks at pictures in books
18 Months to 3 Years	<input type="checkbox"/> Imitates simple actions like waving, pointing, and clapping <input type="checkbox"/> Matches colors, objects, shapes, and pictures <input type="checkbox"/> Names or points to self in a photo and identifies body parts in pictures

Sources: Prevent Blindness and Illinois Functional Vision Screening Tool

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Risk Factors for Vision Concerns in Infants and Toddlers

- Prematurity, especially born before 32 weeks
- Low birth weight
- Brain injury or trauma, or bleeding in the brain
- Diseases or syndromes (Trisomy 21, CHARGE, Usher)
- Central nervous system problems like cerebral palsy, seizures, or hydrocephalus
- Family history of retinal blastoma, congenital cataracts, or other eye conditions
- Young maternal age, especially mothers under 22
- Maternal infection during pregnancy – including rubella, toxoplasmosis, cytomegalovirus (CMV), and some sexually transmitted infections like herpes, gonorrhea, and chlamydia
- Maternal smoking or drug use

"A lot of families get that initial diagnosis and get stuck because they're scared. It's hard to make that first step to move forward and realize this isn't the end of things for my kid. She'll be able to learn and it's going to be okay."

— Anna, Mother of Eleanna

Red Flags of Possible Vision Issues

The way the eye looks (unusual appearance):

- Eyes are crossed, turn in or out, shake constantly, or move independently of one another
- Eye lid(s) droop to cover pupil
- Pupil(s) look cloudy, white, misshapen, or different sizes
- Eyes water constantly

The way the child uses their eyes (atypical function):

- Prefers one eye over the other, tilts/turns head, or closes one eye
- Holds objects unusually close or far away when looking at them
- Frequently trips or runs into obstacles
- Difficulty with changes in surfaces, like stairs or curbs
- Stands or sits unusually close to the TV
- Squints or frowns when trying to focus
- Avoids visual focus by looking away or staring at lights
- Cries or indicates pain in bright lighting situations like sunlight or is slow to adjust to changes in lighting conditions



Learn how Vision Forward can help your child!

Contact Tracey Stanislawski

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