

VISION

A PUBLICATION OF THE MALONEY VISION INSTITUTE, THE VISION CORRECTION SPECIALISTS

VOLUME 3, 2005



EARLY, FREQUENT EYE EXAMS ARE KEY TO RAISING HEALTHY KIDS

As concerned parents we want to do all we can to help our children do their best in school. But one area many parents unwittingly overlook is making sure poor vision doesn't needlessly handicap their kids in the classroom or on the playground.

Only about one third of all children have had eye examinations or vision screening before entering school and 25 percent of school-age children have vision problems, studies show. Another recent study found that more than one in 10 teenagers have undetected or untreated vision problems.

"Early detection and treatment of eye and vision problems needs to be a major public health goal," said Dr. Farid Eghbali of the Maloney Vision Institute.

"The earlier a vision problem is diagnosed and treated, the less potential negative effect it may have on a child's academic, physical and psychological development."

Vision's Genetic Downside

Although California law requires that schools periodically screen every child's eyesight, many vision problems can go undetected by the school nurse. Some children may have eyes that don't work well together, for example. Such eye-teaming deficiencies and other vision problems may manifest

themselves in ways that parents and teachers fail to recognize. Moreover, many vision problems can be inherited.

"Statistically, children whose parents have astigmatism, farsightedness or nearsightedness tend to have, genetically speaking, offspring with a higher rate of vision problems than others. It's not a guarantee but a higher likelihood," Dr. Eghbali said.

All this makes a compelling case for ensuring that children have periodic eye examinations by a professional. That means early testing for infants and toddlers, testing once a year for school-aged children with vision problems and every two to three years for children with normal vision, according to the American Academy of Ophthalmology and the American Optometric Association.

"The child or infant does not have to read, recognize objects or be verbal. There are tests we do to determine whether a child needs vision correction as well as whether their eyes are aligned for far and near vision," Dr. Eghbali said.

Also, what is commonly called "color blindness" or more correctly termed by doctors as "color deficiency" can affect a child's performance, particularly in the early grades.

"Eight percent of males and .4 percent of females are color deficient. Children should not go through school without parents and primary-grade teachers knowing if a child has trouble distinguishing colors.

Amblyopia Or Lazy Eye

Another vision deficiency found mostly in children is amblyopia, also known as lazy eye. Roughly 3

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NEW TECHNOLOGY BOOSTS ODDS OF REPAIRING DAMAGED EYES; HAPPY ENDING FOR NAPA MAN

New technology now gives hope of fully corrected vision to people whose eyesight was unintentionally damaged by eye surgeons inexperienced in laser eye surgery when it was introduced several years ago.

Lee Philipson, the Assistant District Attorney for Napa County, Calif., is one example of a person whose vision in his left eye was severely distorted by eye surgery eight years ago.

"It felt like I was trying to see while standing under the shower," Mr. Philipson said after the failed procedure.

But with the help of the new, state-of-the-art Wavefront mapping technology at the Maloney Vision Institute, Mr. Philipson's vision has been restored and is now 20/25. It is one of the most gratifying outcomes in Dr. Robert Maloney's

20-year ophthalmology career.

Star Wars Technology For Eyes

The new VISX Wavefront system is the latest major advancement in ophthalmology. In contrast to conventional Lasik treatments which measure one point in the eye, the Wavefront system enables eye surgeons to digitally map 200 points on the eye. It gives the surgeon an extraordinarily detailed topographical picture with which to perform either Lasik or photorefractive keratectomy, commonly known as PRK.

Wavefront technology comes from the process of adaptive optics, first proposed by scientists in 1953. Adaptive optics allows astronomers to compensate for the light distortions in the atmosphere. Further studies in adaptive optics became available from declassified information developed for the so-called Star Wars missile defense shield.

In Mr. Philipson's case, the Wavefront technology has enabled him to once again live a normal life and with excellent vision.

Mr. Philipson, who grew up in Southern California and graduated from UCLA, said the Napa area surgeon he chose generally was well thought of and "a very likable person." But he says he should have done more to check the doctor's experience and qualifications.



Lee Philipson before (above) and after.

NEARSIGHTED CANDIDATES SOUGHT FOR FDA STUDY ON LASIK

The Maloney Vision Institute is one of seven centers in the United States that is recruiting candidates for an FDA Clinical research LASIK study. If you're nearsighted or wear bifocal glasses or contact lenses you might be eligible to participate in this FDA study.

The study utilizes the VISX Excimer Laser System to correct visual errors measured by the VISX WaveScan Wavefront System. Candidates must be healthy, at least 40 years old and are nearsighted with or without an astigmatism. The candidates chosen must be able to return for a follow-up with the study one year after the procedure.

If you or someone you know might be a candidate or you want to learn more about the study, contact us at the Maloney Vision Institute at 310-208-3937.

The Search For A Cure

“The Lasik procedure on the right eye went fine. But the doctor made a very bad flap on my left eye. He put the flap back down and told me to come back in three months when it healed,” he said.

But during the intervening three months, Mr. Philipson’s left eye developed epithelial cells that the doctor failed to detect when it was time to have the Lasik procedure completed.

The after-effects were tragic for Mr. Philipson and marked the beginning of years of frustration and blurry vision.

Mr. Philipson immediately began a search to find a qualified surgeon who could repair the damaged left eye. That search led him to the Maloney Vision Institute.



“When I first met with Dr. Maloney he worked on my eye and improved my vision enough so I no longer felt I was in the shower – a huge improvement. But he also told me that there was little else that could be done until new technology arrived that would take care of my problem. That gave me hope,” he said.

Delivering On The Promise

On May 17 Mr. Philipson again visited Dr. Maloney, who was an FDA investigator on the new Wavefront technology that now was approved for use. For Mr. Philipson the new technology delivered on its promise. The procedure was enormously successful.

“Wavefront technology enables physicians to customize eye prescriptions for individuals with greater precision than ever before,” Dr. Maloney said.

For the average patient seeking vision correction, Wavefront allows doctors to boost vision beyond 20/20.

“Let me put it this way,” Mr. Philipson said. “For eight years I could not ignore my vision. I thought about it all the time. I don’t even think about it now. With both eyes open my vision is 20/15.

“I have no doubt that Dr. Maloney saved the vision in my left eye,” Mr. Philipson said. “He’s such a kind, decent, compassionate man. If lawyers were like that there wouldn’t be a whole lot of lawyer jokes. He’s a lifesaver as far as I’m concerned.”

GIFT OF SIGHT OFFERED TO DISABLED

Dr. Robert Maloney has helped launch a national program in which eye surgeons provide LASIK or vision correction surgery at no charge to quadriplegics.

“To many people glasses are a sometimes a mere nuisance, but to quadriplegics glasses can be a constant source of aggravation,” said Dr. Maloney, who was quoted in a recent issue of “New Mobility,” a publication for the physically disabled.

While serving on a committee in the American Academy of Ophthalmology, Dr. Maloney assisted with the formation of a program called Focus on Independence. The program currently consists of seven doctors who are volunteering their time at clinics throughout the United States.

Adults who have suffered a traumatic spinal cord injury and whose vision hasn’t fluctuated in the past year are eligible for the program.

For more information, call the Maloney Vision Institute.

VISION

HEALTHY EYES ARE VITAL . *continued from page 1*

percent of children under age 6 have some form of amblyopia.

Amblyopia is the loss or lack of development of central vision in one eye that is unrelated to any eye health problem and is not correctable with lenses. It can result from a failure to use both eyes together. Lazy eye is often associated with crossed-eyes or a large difference in the degree of nearsightedness or farsightedness between the two eyes.

Special visual acuity tests other than the standard eye charts as well as examination with cyclopegic drops are the best diagnostic tools for amblyopia, which can be treated successfully up to age 17. Older patients generally require more intensive vision therapy.

But detection and treatment before age 2 produces the best rate of correction. So it is important to diagnose and treat amblyopia early.

Fooling The School Nurse

California law requires that school nurses check students' vision upon first enrollment and every three years through the eighth grade. This includes

a one-time color vision appraisal for boys.

But Dr. Eghbali cautions that these vision tests sometimes are rudimentary, at best. While waiting in line, for example, children can memorize and recite the "T-Z-B-E-C-L" line on the eye chart for 20/20 vision. Additionally, general eye health is merely grossly examined by the nurse without direct ophthalmoscopy.

In other words, vision screening by the school nurse, while helpful, falls far short of a comprehensive eye examination.

So, on your back-to-school to-do list, in addition to pencils, paper and clothes, it's important that your son's or daughter's vision has been checked recently. Make certain the reason they've moved to the head of the class isn't to see the blackboard



better. Call us if you would like a referral for a doctor who can examine your child.

MANY SEE OPPORTUNITY IN TAX-FREE FLEX-PLANS

Health-care reimbursement accounts, also known as flex-plans, are gaining in popularity because they enable you to put aside up to \$4,000 a year tax free from your gross income to pay for medical expenses not covered by your insurance plan.

Many people forget that their flex-plan accounts can be used toward such procedures as Lasik surgery and often neglect to use the funds they've set aside before the end of the year, forfeiting the money. It pays to be wise and make the most of your smart financial planning.

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