
Vision screenings become mandatory for Oregon children ages 7 or younger who are in school or preschool



At a June 21 vision screening event at Oaks Park, Miss Oregon Princess Ella Osborne talks with Dr. David Wilson about her mission to help other children who have to wear glasses. The event was sponsored by the Elks Children's Eye Clinic at OHSU's Casey Eye Institute. (Studio McDermott)



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Starting July 1, every Oregon child who is 7 or younger will be required to undergo a vision screening when he or she starts school or preschool to check for several eye diseases that can be treated successfully if they are caught early.

The new requirement was approved by the 2013 Oregon Legislature when it unanimously passed [HB 3000](#).

The bill received strong support from OHSU's [Casey Eye Institute](#). Here are seven things for parents to know about the screenings and the eye diseases they are meant to catch, courtesy of [Dr. David J. Wilson](#), chairman of OHSU's ophthalmology department, who called the screenings "a good public health measure."

1. "The screenings will pick up any eye disease that causes misalignment of the eyes or a decrease of the vision in one eye or the other," Wilson said.

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2. The most commonly found diseases are **refractive errors**, such as nearsightedness, farsightedness and astigmatism; and **amblyopia**, also known as lazy eye, which affects about 3 percent of the population, Wilson said. The most common symptom of amblyopia is one eye turning inward or outward, he said.
3. The screenings take at most a few minutes using a noninvasive device.
4. Children who do not pass the screenings will be referred for a full eye examination. Treatment can be as simple as a pair of prescription glasses or an eye patch.
5. The screenings are important because parents can't rely on children to complain about vision problems, Wilson said. For kids with poor vision, "it's just natural to them."
6. The screenings are also important because treatment works best and is quickest when a child is 7 or younger and can still recover to some extent from damage caused by eye disease. "After the child gets older, you can't recover the vision," Wilson said.
7. The Elks Children's Eye Clinic at OHSU is holding **free vision screenings throughout the state** this summer. For more information, visit the **clinic's website**. Pediatricians also can do vision screenings.

Related: [What to know about your child's vision](#)

Catching and treating any vision problems your child may have "is a really excellent way to best prepare your child for the visual tasks that come into play when they start school," Wilson said. "About 80 percent of learning in the early years of education is related to vision, so children that don't have normal vision are going to be at some risk for some delay in learning. That's not true 100 percent, but (treatment) is just a good way to give a child every chance of success."

Here's a video with more on why ophthalmologists support early screening for eye disease.

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