

# Peace Of Mind About Babies' Eye Health

(NAPSA)—Optometrists are giving the gift of peace throughout the country—peace of mind to every mother that her baby is developing healthy eyes and vision through InfantSEE®, a no-cost public health program designed to provide one-time comprehensive eye and vision assessments to infants between 6 and 12 months of age, offering early detection of potential eye and vision problems at no cost, regardless of income.

Stacey Zellers was pregnant when she first learned about the InfantSEE program, but, like many parents, wondered if an eye assessment was really necessary for an infant. Shortly after her daughter Grace reached the 6-month mark, she scheduled an InfantSEE assessment at her optometrist's office.

As fate would have it, at the end of the 45-minute appointment, the optometrist found a suspicious white mass in Grace's left eye. Grace was later diagnosed with retinoblastoma, the seventh most-common pediatric cancer. Weeks later, Grace underwent surgery to remove the cancerous mass and enucleate the eye. Today, Grace is doing well and developing like other children her age.

"We all know to take our children to the pediatrician, but many parents wait until their child is ready to enter school before seeing an eye doctor. For some children, like Grace, that could be too late," says Zellers. "The optometrists who volunteer their time and resources to bring us InfantSEE say that the program is their gift to America's children. This year, my gift to America's moms is a reminder to have their infant's eyes checked."

More than 7,600 optometrists nationwide volunteer to provide assessments from their practices, and to date, an estimated 125,000

to 150,000 babies have had their eye health and vision assessed. The program launched in 2005 as the result of a partnership between the American Optometric Association and The Vision Care Institute of Johnson & Johnson Vision Care, Inc., with support from former president Jimmy Carter, honorary national chair and spokesman, and has since been endorsed by the Office of the Surgeon General, Prevent Blindness America, the American Public Health Association and the National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners.

"Just as you would take your child to a dentist to help prevent cavities and future dental problems, parents should take their children to an eye and vision care specialist to help prevent potential eye and vision problems," says Scott Jens, O.D., F.A.A.O. and InfantSEE chairman. "Both dentist and optometrist visits are complementary to the routine well-care exams a baby receives at the pediatrician's office."

Public health experts recommend that children visit an eye care professional in the first year of life—one of the most critical stages of visual development—to identify the potential for eye and vision problems. In fact, one in 10 children is at risk from undiagnosed eye and vision problems, which, if undetected, could lead to permanent vision impairment and, in rare cases like Grace's, life-threatening health risks. However, only 14 percent of children from infancy to age 6 have had a comprehensive eye assessment from an eye care professional.

Parents can learn more about the program and find a participating optometrist by visiting [www.infantsee.org](http://www.infantsee.org) or calling (888) 396-EYES (888-396-3937).