

# Eye on Health



## Seeing Smart From The Start

(NAPSA)—What you do for your baby's health in the first year of life can make a big difference for all the rest. For one thing, scheduling regular visits to the pediatrician is important. So is visiting an eye doctor. In fact, it's estimated that one in 10 infants is at risk from undiagnosed eye or vision problems.

The most critical stages of vision development occur in a child's first year of life; therefore, optometrists across the United States are providing free, comprehensive eye and vision assessments for infants between 6 and 12 months of age through a public health program called InfantSEE.

Since many eye and vision conditions don't have symptoms that can be easily identified by a parent or during a well-baby checkup, a comprehensive eye assessment by an optometrist is imperative to check for conditions such as strabismus (crossed eyes), amblyopia (lazy eye) and retinoblastoma (eye cancer).

"Many parents are surprised to learn that a child's eyes are going through so many important developmental stages so early in life," said Dr. Glen Steele, optometrist and chair of the InfantSEE committee. "It's the ideal time to detect eye and vision problems before conditions worsen or cause developmental delays."

Optometrists have the clinical education, training and experience, as well as the instruments and resources, to provide non-invasive eye and vision assess-



**A visit to the eye doctor can be vital to your baby's vision.**

ments for nonverbal patients. A number of techniques are used, including tests to determine if the infant can fix his or her eyes on an object and follow it; to assess the infant's control of eye movements; and to identify certain objects the baby prefers to look at and at what distances. The optometrist will also use lenses and a small light to assess how a baby's eye responds to particular targets. An infant's eyelids and tear ducts will also be checked, and once the baby's eyes are dilated, the doctor will examine the inner eye. Detecting and correcting a vision issue as early as possible is the best way to ensure healthy eyes for the future.

The American Optometric Association recommends that an infant's first eye exam take place at 6 months of age. Unless problems are detected, the next exam should be at age 3, again before entering school and then yearly. To find a participating InfantSEE doctor nearby, visit the program's website at [www.infantsee.org](http://www.infantsee.org).