

## **Encouraging your child to wear glasses**

### **Why does my child need to wear glasses?**



Glasses are prescribed to correct a refractive error. Refractive error can mean long or short-sight, with or without astigmatism. Long-sight means that distance vision is clearer than near vision and is caused by the eyeball being slightly too small. Short-sight means that near vision is clearer than distance vision and is caused by the eyeball being slightly too large. Astigmatism results from irregular curvature of the front of the eye and distorts vision at all distances.

### **When does my child need to wear his/her glasses?**

Your Optician or Optometrist will tell you when your child should wear his/her glasses. If your child needs to wear his/her glasses in school it is important that the class teacher knows when the glasses should be worn.

### **Why won't my child wear his/her glasses?**

There can be several reasons for a child's reluctance, and it is important that you consider each one.



Are your child's glasses fitting properly? Are the glasses too tight against the side of the head or behind the ears? Are they too loose and keep slipping down your child's nose? A child will not want to wear glasses that feel uncomfortable. Glasses can be adjusted to fit your child properly and you should insist that the Optometrist/Optician takes time to do this when you collect the glasses. If the glasses become bent or stop fitting properly get them adjusted again. Your Optician will be happy to do this for you.



If your child is reluctant to wear his/her glasses at first this may be because they are adjusting to the prescription. When we make the world clearer with glasses, we may think this means 'better' – your child may just think 'different'. This difference can sometimes take a little while to get used to.

Some children do not like objects on or near their face. Others do not like change. Once your child learns that the glasses will not harm them and gets used to the glasses they will be happy to wear them.

### **How do I persuade my child to keep his/her glasses on?**

Start by showing your child that you wear glasses (if you do). Then begin to point out family members and close friends that wear glasses. Don't forget cartoon characters and book characters that wear glasses, perhaps read a book about glasses with your child. Try to emphasize that glasses help you to see things that you could not see without them. Do not talk about your child wearing glasses yet, first we want your child to feel that wearing glasses is something that many people do.

A simple 'programme' works well. Choose an activity that your child enjoys doing with you, and one for which the glasses will help. It may be reading a story, or watching a favourite DVD, for example. Make it a 'special time' together - this way your child learns to associate wearing glasses with a pleasant experience. Put the glasses on at the start of the activity (don't forget to put yours on if you need them too!) and make the activity short at first. If your child takes the glasses off, simply stop the activity. Persevere, increasing the length of time and/or introducing a second 'spectacle-wearing' activity. Don't worry if it takes a long time (weeks or even months) before your child is happy to keep his/her glasses on.



Most importantly, do NOT turn it into a battle – your child will win! Children learn very quickly that throwing glasses across the room gets more attention than almost anything else!

Avoid curl sides (except for tiny babies) and straps to keep glasses on. Usually they just give your child something to fight against, and make matters worse! If your child won't wear his/her glasses at home then perhaps he/she will wear them at school. Chat to the class teacher and ask for help in trying to persuade your child to wear the glasses. Give them a copy of this handout. There may be other children in the class who wear glasses and this may encourage your child to wear his/hers.

### **What do I do if my child WILL NOT wear his/her glasses?**

Some few children will not wear their glasses, even after all of the above has been tried. Don't panic. It is common for children to grow out of their reluctance to wear glasses. It may be that if you wait for a few weeks and then try again it will be more successful. Glasses will improve your child's vision and this benefit will eventually motivate him/her to want to wear his/her glasses.