



## ***My Child Needs Glasses!***

### **Children & Spectacles: A Guide for Parents & Guardians**



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

The results of the tests carried out in the Eye Clinic tell us that your child would benefit from having spectacles (glasses). The main reasons for prescribing spectacles for children are:

1. To help the eyes develop good vision for adulthood (in other words to treat, or help avoid a 'lazy eye').
2. To straighten the eyes and help them work together.
3. To help the child to see more clearly.

For some children spectacles are prescribed for only one of these reasons, whereas for other children all three reasons may apply.

#### **Does my child need to wear spectacles all the time?**

This will depend on exactly what eye problem your child has. For many children, the spectacles are helping the eyes develop properly. In this case, the spectacles should be worn during all waking hours. For vigorous play where there is a risk of the spectacles being damaged, it may be wise to remove them. How well your child will manage without the spectacles will depend on the type and strength of the prescription. Please ask the clinical staff in the Eye Clinic for advice. If in doubt, encourage your child to wear the spectacles during all waking hours. In fact, full time wear is often easier to achieve than occasional wear. Importantly, using spectacles does not encourage the eyes to become 'lazy'.

#### **Where do I get the spectacles?**

The Eye Clinic at the Norfolk & Norwich Hospital does not supply spectacles. When spectacles are first prescribed for your child, the doctor or optometrist who carries out the test will provide you with a form called an 'HES3 Prescription & Voucher'. This form contains all the information needed for a community optician to make a pair of spectacles to the hospital's prescription. As soon as you are able, take your child along to a community optician of your choice and hand in the form. You can choose a large 'chain' of opticians or an 'independent' optician, but unlike for adults, children's spectacles must be dispensed by a qualified optician. The optician will help you choose a suitable frame, and will advise on what type of spectacle lenses are most suitable for your child's prescription. It can be useful to keep a copy of the front of the form for future reference.

#### **Will I have to pay for the spectacles?**

The HES3 form includes a voucher towards the cost of the spectacles. The voucher provides you with a fixed amount of money towards the cost of the spectacles. Whether the voucher covers the whole cost of the spectacles depends on the value of the frame and the lenses. You may choose a more expensive frame, or you may choose thinner, lighter lenses but you may need to pay some money in addition to the value of the voucher. Some opticians will supply a basic pair of spectacles at no extra charge if you have a HES3 form. Feel free to visit a number of opticians before choosing one to supply the spectacles.

## **What happens if my child loses or breaks the spectacles?**

If your child's spectacles are lost or damaged, you do not need to wait until your child's next Eye Clinic appointment before getting them repaired or replaced. If your child's spectacles require repair or replacement for any of the following reasons:

1. Loss.
2. Breakage.
3. Fair wear and tear.
4. Spectacles outgrown.

you may attend a community optician to have the spectacles repaired or replaced. It is often easiest to return to the optician who originally supplied the spectacles, but you can go to another optician if you prefer. You should not need to contact the Eye Clinic in the event of lost, damaged or outgrown spectacles. Ask the optician to fill in a 'GOS4' form. This will provide help with the cost of the repair/replacement. If your child is eligible for a second/spare pair of spectacles (see below), then these may also be repaired/replaced via a GOS4 form in the same way as for the main pair. There is no time limit after using your HES3 form beyond which the spectacles can no longer be repaired or replaced by a community optician providing your child is still under 16 years of age.

## **Is it possible to have a spare pair of spectacles?**

No child is automatically entitled to help with the cost of a second pair of spectacles to the same prescription. Occasionally, the doctor or optometrist may issue a second HES3 form towards the cost of a second pair if they believe a second pair of spectacles is clinically necessary (usually if the child has learning difficulties or where very strong spectacles are required).

## **Is it possible to have prescription sunglasses?**

No child is automatically entitled to help with the cost of prescription sunglasses in addition to their ordinary spectacles. Occasionally, the doctor or optometrist may issue a second HES3 form towards the cost of prescription sunglasses if they believe it to be clinically necessary (in other words, if your child's medical eye problem makes their eyes unusually sensitivity to light).

## **Can my child have thinner lenses in their spectacles?**

In general, the stronger the lenses required, the thicker they will be. There are a number of ways of making lenses thinner and lighter without reducing their strength. If you wish to have thinner, lighter lenses, you should ask the optician who supplies the spectacles for advice. Choosing thinner, lighter lenses may increase the cost of the spectacles, and this additional cost must be met by the parent/guardian.

## **Can my child have breakage-resistant frames?**

There are a number of breakage-resistant spectacle frames available for children (e.g. 'Nano Vista' frames). These frames may more expensive than standard frames which means the parent/guardian is more likely to have to contribute to the cost of the spectacles (see above under 'Will I have to pay for the spectacles?'). If you are interested in breakage-resistant frames then please discuss this with the optician supplying the spectacles.

## **Will I be given a HES3 prescription & voucher form each time we visit the Eye Clinic?**

The spectacle test is usually repeated every year. If a change of prescription is found, then a new HES3 form will be issued. If no change to the prescription is necessary, you will be given a form detailing the current spectacle prescription and explaining that no change in the spectacle prescription was necessary. Should your child's spectacles require repair or replacement at a later date, you should follow the instructions above to get the spectacles replaced by a community optician.

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