

The eye test explained



Everyone has the right to have an eye test. No one is too disabled to have his or her eyes tested. However, many adults with learning disabilities do not have regular eye tests. Our research shows that people with learning disabilities are ten times more likely than other people to have serious sight problems, so having regular eye checks is really important.

In the previous factsheets we discussed how important it is that people receive quality eye care and how we should prepare people for their visit to the optometrist. In this factsheet we discuss what might occur at an eye test. For the eye test to be as successful as possible it is important that the person is given every opportunity to know what will occur at their eye test.

The eye test explained

An eye test will find out how well the person can see. It will find out whether the person needs glasses or whether the person's eye is healthy or not. An eye test can diagnose a visual impairment that might have been undetected by others. An optometrist can refer the person to other services such as an eye hospital or other health services.

Make sure that the optometrist knows how the person likes to communicate and any special needs, likes and dislikes they may have.

- Can they say yes or no?
- Can they understand and say the words 'better' or 'worse'?
- Can they match pictures?

Be prepared to help during the test by encouraging and supporting the person or interpreting their responses - and don't be offended if the optometrist tells you that you are in the way.



There are many different parts to an eye test, and all should ideally be carried out but not necessarily in the order given below:

- The optometrist will ask about the person's history, symptoms and medication.

The optometrist will do an eye health check - to look for eye diseases or damage inside and outside the eye. An eye health check is made up of a lot of different tests so be aware that:

- This will include a torch light

being shone into the eye so the optometrists can get a clear look at the back of the eye.

- The optometrist may need to turn out the lights to get the best view, so you need to tell them if this is likely to upset the person having their eyes examined.
- The optometrist may have to get close to the individual to get the best view.



- Eye drops may need to be put in the person's eye to widen the pupil. It is important to be aware that eye drops can blur vision for a short period and the eye drops take 15 to 20 minutes to work. You may need to go back and wait in

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reception while the eye drops start to work. Eye drops may take a couple of hours to wear off and during that time people can have problems with bright light and moving around.

- The optometrist may also do an examination to check the pressure within the eye, especially in an older person. This examination involves air being puffed into the eye.
- Many optometrists will also screen for diabetes by taking a photograph of the inside of the eye. This involves the person keeping very still and looking straight ahead into a special camera.
- An evaluation of eye movement control (a 'binocular vision check') will take place to assess how the two eyes work together and an examination to check how the eyes react to changes in light may also take place.
- The optometrist will also examine the person's level of vision for both distance and near tasks and they will check for shortsight, longsight and/or astigmatism and the need for glasses or contact lenses for near or distance.
- A visual fields test - to assess 'all round vision' will take place. It is important that the optometrist examines a person's visual field, which is the extent to which a person can see around them without moving either their eyes or head. This test should establish whether a person has full all-round (peripheral and central) vision, loss on

one side or the other, has lost their central vision or has tunnel or 'patchy' vision. This test can be done by asking the person to look at a central dot of light in a machine and then count the dots of light that appear around it.

The optometrist will **examine the level of vision ('visual acuity')**. Testing visual acuity can be enjoyable and you can practice this part of the test at home so that the person is prepared. The following tests may be used to check the level of vision:



Letter charts and adapted letter charts

Snellen chart - commonly seen in GP surgeries, optometrists

and hospital eye clinics, involves reading the letters down the chart, starting with the largest one at the top.

There are simple charts for people who cannot identify letters but can match the letters. The optometrist holds up a booklet containing one letter, or a row of letters, on a page. The person responds by pointing to letters on a card held on their lap.

Kay Picture test

The optometrist presents a single black picture or a row of pictures (boot, clock, duck etc) and the person responds by naming, or pointing at a picture on their card. Anyone caring for, or involved with helping people with learning disabilities to prepare for or attend an eye test can purchase a half price set of Kay Picture

matching cards.

Alternatively, the person might sign in Makaton to identify optometrist the picture. Different sized pictures are held up by the optometrist to establish the limit of a person's vision.



Cardiff Acuity test

This test was originally devised for young children and an adult version is now available. It uses the 'preferential looking' principle. The person being examined does not need to name or match but simply look at a picture either at the top or the bottom of a card. The optometrist holds the card at eye level and watches for the person's eye movements towards the picture.

The optometrist will also use trial frames to help them decide what lenses would help the person see best. The optometrist may place a trial frame on the person's face. This may be a strange experience and people may find it uncomfortable.

Other optometrists may simply hold a lens up to the person to look through it. The person is then asked if the lens makes things better or worse. Many people (of all levels of ability) find it hard to answer, so you may want to practice before the appointment and use phrases such as 'nearer' or 'far away' until you are clear that a consistent response is being given.