We rely so much on our vision to inform us about the world around us. So, it is important to understand some of the ways that you can help your child achieve optimal vision. Unlike hearing, the sense of sight is not fully developed at birth. All babies are born with underdeveloped vision, which naturally matures through stimulation of their eyes and the visual connections within the brain. Clear vision experienced by an adult is achievable at approximately 4 – 5 years of age.

While there are genetic and lifestyle factors that can increase the risk of a child developing eye problems, these factors do not necessarily affect each child in the same way. Therefore, the best approach is to encourage good eye health from a young age and by being aware of the risks to normal visual development.

1. **Diet** – Eat a variety of vegetables, especially of the green and orange variety. Vegetables contain important nutrients that are essential for good eye health and overall general wellbeing.

2. **Screen time** – The following guidelines on screen time have been recommended by Paediatricians:
   a. 2 years of age and younger: None to very limited screen time, and only when sharing with an adult.
   b. 2 – 5 years of age: No more than 1 hour per day. Choose content that is educational and non-violent, and preferably share the experience with your child.

Please note, this refers to the total amount of time spent watching TV, iPad/tablet and/or phone. It may also be of benefit to take a break from looking at screen devices every 20 – 30 minutes to look at different distances.

3. **Outdoor time** – Research has shown the protective effects of natural light and time spent outdoors on the development and progression of short-sightedness. Paediatric Ophthalmologist Dr Caroline Catt advises children having regular natural light exposure from being outdoors for two hours per day, but also states that too much sun can be harmful to the eyes. Children should wear a hat when outdoors, and sunglasses when sunlight is bright.

4. **Prevention of Childhood Eye Injury** – Help prevent the risk of eye injury by ensuring appropriate supervision, and by making your home and backyard ‘eye safe’. When the opportunity comes, teach your child about how to be ‘eye safe’. Go to [www.eyeplaysafe.org.au](http://www.eyeplaysafe.org.au) for factsheets and online games.

5. **Prompt Assessment** – Some eye problems in childhood may have a better outcome with early detection and treatment. If you are suspicious of any eye problems, take your child to see an ophthalmologist (eye doctor) and/or optometrist as soon as problems are noted. Otherwise, speak to your GP about your concerns for further assessment.

