

Engaging With Today's Parents to Promote Pediatric Vision



Panel Discussion and Research Report

HOYA



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TRIVEX[®]
LENS MATERIAL



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Pulling in Parents

To promote children’s eye health, it is essential to engage parents.

- Parents are the gatekeepers to their children’s eye care, controlling how often and whether children visit their eye doctor.
- Parents also provide direction on how children should protect their eyes on a daily basis with proper eyewear with 100 percent UV protection, and on how they should care for their eyewear, to reduce damage and enhance vision.
- Healthy habits start young, so proper education of parents – and therefore their children – can influence how well a child sees for a lifetime.

ROUNDTABLE OVERVIEW

PPG Industries, Inc. (PPG) and Hoya Vision Care North America (Hoya) are committed to promoting children’s vision, and to drawing attention to the importance of children’s eyewear and the benefits of Phoenix® lenses made from TRIVEX® lens material.

In an effort to more broadly engage the industry and gain a greater understanding of the opportunities and challenges that exist within this area, PPG and Hoya hosted a roundtable of optometrists (O.D.s) during the American Optometric Association’s Optometry’s Meeting®, addressing the topic: “Engaging With Today’s Parents to Promote Pediatric Vision.” The panel shared clinical perspectives gained through decades of treating children, and explored ideas for instilling proper eye habits among children and their influencers. They also provided their perspectives on recent research by PPG into parents’ views on their kids’ eyewear and their satisfaction with their eyecare professionals.

The roundtable discussion focused on identifying the most critical lens attributes for kids and shared strategies for explaining eyewear care instructions, taking into account the communication level of children. Special attention was paid to how to engage parents in the discussion, and help them understand the role of properly corrected vision in children as a part of overall health and well being.

Research Summary

Recognizing that kids’ eyewear needs are different from those of adults, and that parents’ perspectives often influence how well those needs are met, PPG Industries sponsored a national research initiative in 2012 to gain insights into parents’ opinions on eyewear and the role of in educating their children on lens options and eyewear care. ¹

Overall, the survey showed that, while consumers are interested in a lens that is made of advanced technology and provides a combination of desirable attributes for their children, they are unfamiliar with their choices. Results also indicate that parents don’t always notice when eyeglasses are not being cared for properly, and would appreciate more education from their eyecare professionals in this area.

Insights from this research were used to help spark conversation among panel members about how to engage parents and kids and do a better job of meeting expectations in the role of educator. Specific statistics are shared throughout this paper, as they were woven into multiple panelist discussions.

Panel Insights

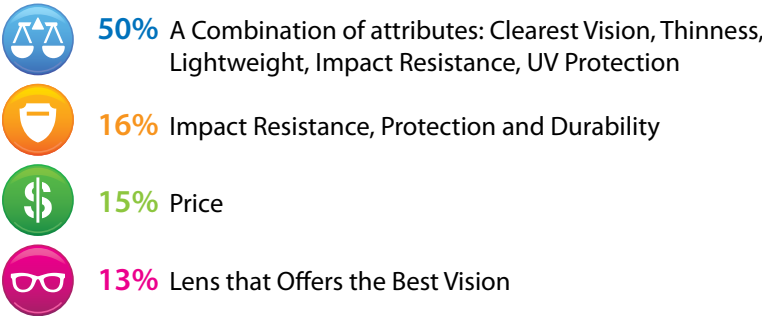
Lens Attributes for Kids

Kids’ eyewear needs are different from those of adults, and parents’ perspectives often influence how well those needs are met.

These perspectives were explored in PPG’s research. When parents were asked to pick what was most important to them when deciding on a lens material for their child’s eyeglasses, about half felt that a **combination of lens attributes** (clearest vision, thinness, light weight, impact resistance and UV protection) was the most important. Another 13 percent said that they would always choose the lens that offers the **best vision**, while 15 percent said **price** was their primary concern. Sixteen percent said that **impact resistance, protection and durability** was their primary concern.

Parental Preferences: A Combination of Factors are Important

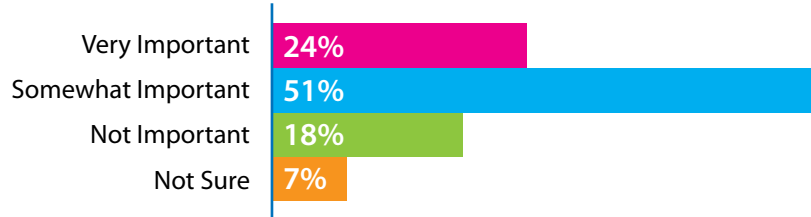
What is the most important to you (parents) when deciding on a lens material for your child’s eyeglasses?



O.D. panelists agreed that a combination of lens attributes were needed to best meet parents’ expectations and children’s vision needs. Safety, clarity of sight (with a high ABBE value and minimal distortion) and comfortable/lightweight lenses were all factors that panelists considered to be desirable for kids and that would increase the likelihood that children will comply with wearing instructions. If kids are experiencing distortion or discomfort, they’re less likely to want to wear their glasses. Quality frames, potentially with spring hinges to help maintain the adjustment, were also a key consideration.

Technology also emerged as a significant consideration for parents. Three out of four agreed that it is important that their child’s eyeglasses are made with the most **advanced lens technology**. Eighty-six percent of respondents said it was important that their vision insurance plan covers the most advanced lens technologies for their child’s eyeglasses.

How important is it to you that your child’s eyeglasses are made with the most advanced lens technology?



“I like to believe that practitioners are trusted advisors for the family; so every parent will hear me recommend what I’d put my own children in. I explain to every mom and dad that we recommend Phoenix lenses made from Trivex material because they are the lightest, and you don’t have to worry about UV protection or impact resistance. In fact, they actually surpass what is mandated in order for lenses to be considered ‘impact resistant.’ Material is just as important in my recommendation to parents as prescription and design.”

● Greg Hicks, O.D.,
Family Eyecare Centers,
Sandusky/Huron, Ohio



In addition to the generally agreed upon lens attributes that are best for kids, there are specific extra-curricular activities and environments that young patients are exposed to through their hobbies that can impact their visual needs. Checklists can be a useful tool in obtaining information about kids' lifestyles and making a recommendation that includes appropriate features to provide the best possible solution for their range of visual needs (recognizing that this may not be accomplished with one pair of eyeglasses).

For active kids, rec specs with AR and glare/UV reduction may be needed in addition to everyday eyewear (which should also include AR and glare/UV reduction). A scratch coating/warranty is also an appropriate consideration for these patients.

With increased technology in schools and at home, digital lenses and treatments that filter blue light could be a useful add-on to kids' lenses. Reading glasses can also be used for screen time and other near-point activities.

Using the right frame and lens combination for the right activity, and recognizing that one pair of eyeglasses may not do it all, are important steps to ensuring that each child is given the opportunity to experience their best vision throughout the day. If lack of insurance coverage or a tight budget don't allow for the parent to purchase all of the features that are recommended, it's always possible to scale back from what was originally prescribed.

"The more doctors believe in what they're doing, the more clearly that confidence is communicated. If the recommendation is done with the benefits of wearing in mind, versus dwelling on the negatives, it reframes the whole discussion. Once patients understand that glasses are a tool to help them get a job done more efficiently, it's not hard to get their compliance."

● Paul Alan Harris, O.D.,
Southern College of Optometry,
Memphis, Tennessee

Helping Parents View Eyewear as a Medical Device



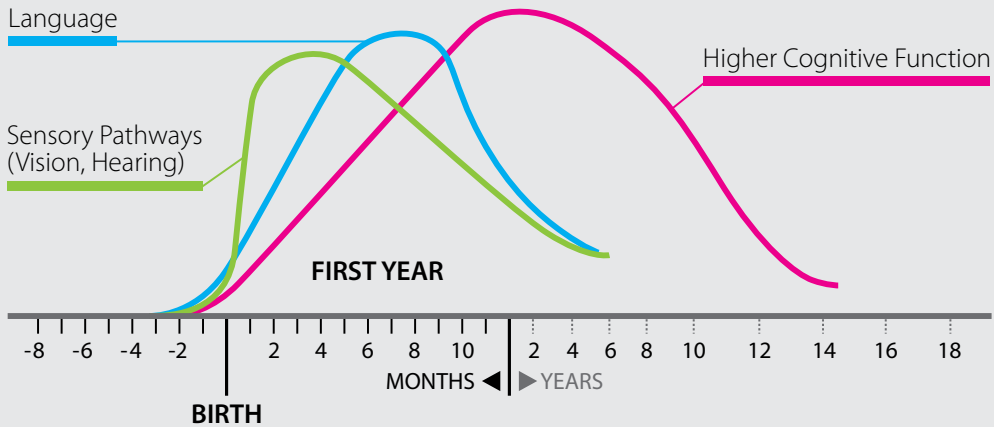
All prescription eyeglasses are regulated as medical devices by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA). There are many factors that are considered for eyeglasses to be FDA-approved, and impact resistance is one of the most important ones – especially for kids. While ALL lenses sold in the United States are required to meet the FDA impact resistance standard, not all lens materials offer the same level of protection. Parents who choose lenses made from Trivex material can feel assured that they are getting lenses for their children that not only meet, but also greatly surpass the FDA minimum impact standard, by more than 300 times.

Many parents may not consider eyeglasses to be "medical devices," and therefore, they do not assign the same value to eyewear as they do to other medical devices. Similar to a child's asthma inhaler or prescription medicine, eyewear is prescribed by a doctor to help a child overcome a health problem and function to the best of his/her ability. It's important for parents to understand that, just as an inhaler helps a child breathe, eyeglasses are prescribed to help a child see. Their children's eyeglasses deserve the same level of care and protection as other medical devices.

Vision and Learning

Human Brain Development

Neural Connections for Different Functions Develop Sequentially



Source: The Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University. C.A. Nelson (2000). Via "Putting Infants and Toddlers on the Path to School Readiness" Report by Zero to Three®.

Current thinking in the field of education is that "school readiness begins at birth." Children are born with a natural curiosity and desire to learn. The language, literacy, writing, math and problem-solving skills that are developed beginning in infancy play a critical role in later school success.

The development of vision begins even before birth, and continues into the school years. With about 80 percent of what children learns in the first 12 years coming through the eyes, vision should be a top priority for school readiness from infancy on.³

"Not only do early cognitive skills rely heavily on sight, but if you also look at the social and emotional milestones at twelve months of age, almost all of them have a strong link to vision."

● Glen T. Steele, O.D. FCOVD FAAO,
Southern College of Optometry,
Memphis, Tennessee

Social and Emotional Milestones at 12 months of Age⁴

- Shy or anxious with strangers
- Cries when mother or father leaves
- Enjoys imitating people in his play
- Shows specific preferences for certain people and toys
- Tests parental responses to her actions during feedings
- Tests parental responses to his behavior
- May be fearful in some situations
- Prefers mother and/or regular caregiver over all others
- Repeats sounds or gestures for attention
- Finger-feeds herself
- Extends arm or leg to help when being dressed

Cognitive Milestones at 12 Months of Age

- Explores objects in many different ways (shaking, banging, throwing, dropping)
- Finds hidden objects easily
- Looks at correct picture when the image is named
- Imitates gestures
- Begins to use objects correctly (drinking from cup, brushing hair, dialing phone, listening to receiver)



Embracing Eyewear

Long-time industry professionals may be noticing a shift in attitudes among new prescription eyeglass wearers – and their parents.

Today’s parents generally understand how vision is associated with learning. There also tends to be a stronger emphasis on academic performance for school-age (and even younger) kids now than there was in the past. As a result, many parents will do whatever it takes to give their child an academic advantage. The global private tutoring market is expected to reach \$102.8 billion by the year 2018.²

Kids are also more accepting – and even enthusiastic – when it comes to getting a prescription for new eye-wear. Eyeglasses are considered more fashionable now and have a much more mainstream acceptance. Even for kids, a variety of styles and brands offer greater options. Glasses are also more prevalent in pop culture – appearing on red carpets, runways and post-game press conferences far more frequently than in the past. Celebrities who appeal to younger audiences, like Justin Bieber, Joe Jonas, Taylor Swift, Justin Timberlake and Katy Perry, are among the many who have been photographed with glasses on.

Eyewear Care and Compliance

Arriving at the best prescription to meet the child/parent’s needs and preferences is an important step in the process, but ensuring that wearing and care instructions are communicated and understood is also vital to the performance of the eyewear in daily life.

Research confirms several areas where eyecare professionals could play a greater role in parent education, including on basic care practices for eyewear. Eyeglasses can be a substantial investment, and habits for how they are cared start young.

Eyecare professionals often encounter issues in young patients that suggest poor understanding of how glasses should be treated. Panelists reported observing problems with keeping glasses on (and storing them inappropriately when they are not on, i.e. not keeping them in a case, or keeping them in a soft case or at the bottom of a backpack), scratching lenses by setting them down roughly and poor cleaning habits. Improper care can result in throwing frames out of alignment, or damage to lenses that can degrade their performance.

The experience of panel members coincided with observations reported by parents in PPG’s survey. Despite **78% of respondents saying they think their children understand the importance of taking care of their eyeglasses**, the majority of the parents surveyed have noticed issues suggesting the opposite.

The most common eyeglass care problems parents noticed in their children were **dropping** their eyeglasses (66%), **taking them off with one hand** (55%), **wiping them with fingers or a shirt** (55%) and **not using a case** when not wearing them (54%).

Below are the percentage of parents who answered “yes” to the following question...

Have you ever noticed your child doing any of the following, or have you ever had any of the following problems with your child’s eyeglasses? Choose all that apply.	
Drops eyeglasses	66%
Wipes eyeglasses with shirt, tissue, towel, fingers, etc.	55%
Takes eyeglasses off with one hand	55%
Does not use eyeglass case when not wearing them	54%
Falls asleep with eyeglasses on	30%
Scratches or breaks lenses	22%
Loses eyeglasses	20%
Twists or chews frames	13%
Sits on eyeglasses	10%
Leaves eyeglasses in car	10%
Uses Windex or other household cleaner to clean the lenses	9%
None of the above	13%

Unfortunately, only **41% of respondents said they were very satisfied** with the amount of education their eyecare professional provided to their child on the proper way to care for their eyeglasses, suggesting that more than half felt their eyecare professionals could have done more.

Panelists shared their own best practices in presenting eyewear care instructions to kids and parents effectively.

- **Position yourself at the head of the class:** when the optometrist is not involved in the conversation on eyewear care, it is a formula for failure. Make eyewear care education part of the exam process, then reinforce it at end of the dispensing process to elevate the importance of the conversation and remind patients and parents of the necessary points throughout the visit. Make an effort to speak directly to kids. You can also give parents checklists after each exam, providing specific instructions on when and where glasses are to be worn (during class, while doing homework, while reading, while using the computer). This serves as a helpful reminder to kids and reinforces doctor’s orders.
- **Review the rules:** give patients specific examples and ask them to echo back instructions to reinforce retention. Wearing rules might include, “Wear your glasses anytime you do anything at arm’s reach for more than two minutes at a time,” or the easy-to-remember saying, “When they’re not on your face, they’re in the case.” To help kids remember to clean their glasses, tie it into their routine (“Clean your glasses when you brush your teeth in the morning”). With kids, it often helps to add humor (like “Will you wear your glasses when you wash your face?” or “Will you wear them when you sleep?”). On patient history forms, ask if parents want a letter on the child’s condition to be sent to a teacher, pediatrician or other professional to make sure that these other influencers are aware of your assessment of the child’s vision needs.
- **Give kids supplies for success:** provide children with a personalized bag of goodies, including a case, cloth, spray and even some candy or stickers to create a positive mood when you sit down to go over care instructions. Warn parents when they’re ordering that you’ll be teaching their child to take care of their glasses when they pick them up to ensure that parents are prepared for the conversation and aren’t rushed.
- **Offer periodic reviews:** periodic checks of eyewear for kids can help ensure that eyewear is performing and being cared for, and confirm when it needs to be readjusted. Glasses that aren’t adjusted correctly may not provide optimal vision correction, and may also cause spurs to form on the nose. An eight-week follow-up for new prescriptions and six-month performance check were suggested by panelists.

“I emphasize to parents is that kids only know what they know. They know how they see, but they don’t know if it’s normal or not. Without an eye exam, parents may never realize their child isn’t seeing well.”

● Elizabeth Christensen, O.D., Rancho Santa Fe, Calif.



Principles for Growing Your Kids’ Practice

- Foster relationships with pediatricians, psychologists, school nurses, local sports teams and other referral sources.
- Host in-office seminars for parents, teachers or other health care professionals.
- Volunteer to help local health departments or reach out to other organizations that touch families who are struggling (Red Cross, Boys and Girls Clubs, YMCA, etc.).
- Create a family-friendly office – from toys and books in the reception area to stools and changing stations in restrooms – and employ a family-friendly staff.
- Market to parents through in-office videos, communication on expanded services for kids and local visibility efforts (like participating in radio/TV interviews).
- Promote your participation in kids-focused programs (like InfantSEE®).
- Take advantage of continuing education opportunities focused on kids’ vision.

"We all know that kids' eyewear needs are different from those of adults, and that parents' perspectives often influence how well those needs are met. That's why it's essential for optometrists to engage parents. They control how often children visit an eye doctor, and help enforce standards for using and caring for eyewear after the appointment."

● Dr. Ann-Marie Lahr, Director of Education at Hoya Vision Care



According to the American Public Health Association, about one in ten preschoolers have eye or vision problems.⁵ However, children this age generally will not voice complaints about their eyes.

In addition, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) report that only one in three children in America has received eye care services before the age of six.⁶ Fewer than one half of all children are screened in pediatric offices; 7 and 62 percent of mothers of pre-school children report that their children have never had a thorough eye examination.⁸ This means that if kids aren't complaining of vision problems, they're likely to remain unidentified as the children enter school.

Conclusion

Panelists agreed that bringing attention to the topic of kids' vision is of the utmost importance. Vision and overall health are inseparable, as are vision development and child development. That places a heavy burden of responsibility on optometrists to ensure kids (and their parents) are receiving the education they need to get the right eyewear and properly maintain it so children can see their best.

Panel participants emphasized that parents should be aware that regular eye exams are important to establish while children are young. Vision problems need to be addressed earlier than ever, given the increased pressure for kids to perform in school. In addition, eye habits are formed early in life, meaning that a lifetime commitment to comprehensive eye care begins when patients are young.

Education for kids and their parents is arguably as important to provide as a quality exam and eyewear. It is essential to help ensure patients enjoy the best vision because they are caring for their eyes and their eyewear, which contributes to patient satisfaction and business growth.

Finally, whether fitting a young patient with improved eyewear that boosts their confidence, or witnessing the gratitude of a parent whose son or daughter is no longer struggling with vision problems, or simply observing a child experience good eyesight for the first time, taking the time to focus on your approach to engaging kids and their parents is well worth the effort and can be incredibly professionally fulfilling. The life changes that can occur as a result of excellent optometric care were reflected upon by all of the roundtable participants as reason enough to focus on this important facet of optometry.

Resources

- ¹ Online survey conducted on behalf of PPG Industries from March 1-5, 2012 by Lightspeed among a nationally representative sample of 500 U.S. adults ages 18+.
- ² Global Industry Analysts, Inc. (GIA) "Private Tutoring: A Global Strategic Business Report" <http://www.strategyr.com/MCP-1597.asp>
- ³ American Optometric Association, "Infant Vision: Birth to 24 Months of Age," 2010. <http://www.eyesiteonwellness.com/family-articles/make-eye-care-a-family-affair#sthash.IKYz64iS.dpuf>
- ⁴ Shelov, Steven. Caring for Your Baby and Young Child, 5th Edition: Birth to Age 5. New York: Bantam Books, 2009. Print.
- ⁵ American Optometric Association, "Preschool Vision: Two to five years of Age," 2013. <http://www.aoa.org/patients-and-public/good-vision-throughout-life/childrens-vision/preschool-vision-2-to-5-years-of-age>
- ⁶ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Visual impairment and use of eye-care services and protective eyewear among children—United States, 2002. MMWR 2005;54(17):425-429.
- ⁷ Schmidt P. Current screening programs. In: Hartmann E, ed. Vision Screening in the Preschool Child: Proceedings of a Conference Held September 10-11, 1998. Bethesda, MD: Genetic Services Branch, Maternal and Child Health Bureau, Health Resources and Services Administration, US Department of Health and Human Services; 1999.
- ⁸ American Optometric Association, "A Nurse's Guide to Vision Screenings and Ocular Emergencies." <http://www.cteyes.org/cms/customer-files/p-edu-school%20nurses-%20sceening.pdf>

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