

# Health Watch

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## Seeing the school nurse isn't enough



Cleburne Eye Clinic is a provider of the InfantSee program, a nationwide program providing free eye and vision assessments to patients less than one year of age, but kids like 5-year old Jewell Grace Bullard need vision examinations, too.

Courtesy photo

BY JAMI SHELTON

Now that school's back in session, kids are learning all kinds of new things, but did you know their learning can be hindered by poor vision? And many times, parents don't even know their student is affected.

Sure, every October or so the school nurse might have them stand in front of the eye chart, but there are many vision problems other than not being able to see the third line, said Dr. Heath Bullard, one of the five therapeutic optometrists at Cleburne Eye Clinic.

“Lots of vision problems are undetected,” Bullard said. “Even though our nurses in Cleburne schools do a great job with vision screenings, they don't always detect if a child is having difficulty focusing or if he's straining to see. Those screenings are meant to detect big problems, but often miss vision conditions that can make learning difficult.”

Bullard said even his own parents were unaware he had undetected vision problems growing up.

“In fifth grade, my parents took me right here to Cleburne Eye Clinic for an eye exam,” he said. “That's when they realized I had poor vision and I got my first pair of glasses, which made a world of difference to me.”

He said as parents, we take for granted that our child can see, so it's often difficult for parents to notice when their child has a vision problem.

“And, lots of kids don't know they can't see well either,” he said. “Their vision is blurry, but that's all they've ever known, so they can't tell you they can't see. I know. I was one of them.”

Bullard said some of the com-

mon symptoms of vision problems in children are headache, eye strain, intermittent blur, especially when reading, loss of place when reading, and loss of concentration.

“Some of the things parents want to be on the lookout for are eyes watering, rubbing of the eyes, tilting of the head while reading, grades slipping, or kids who used to like to read but don't read much anymore. These could all be because the child has an undetected vision problem.

“If left untreated, these vision problems can impact a child's learning, which in turn can negatively affect his self-esteem, which then further impairs learning development.”

Children with uncorrected vision conditions or eye health problems can face many problems in life, not just academically, but socially and even athletically. That's why a comprehensive eye examination is so important for children. With early detection and treatment, your child has the best chance to learn and succeed, he said.

Bullard said even infants as young as six months or a year old can benefit from a comprehensive eye and vision assessment, which is provided free of charge within the first year of life, regardless of a family's income or access to insurance coverage under a nationwide program called InfantSee.

Cleburne Eye Clinic recommends annual comprehensive eye examinations for children and adults, especially during the school years when vision may change frequently.

For more information or an appointment, call Cleburne Eye Clinic at 817-645-2411. Their office is located at 110 W. Henderson St., just west of the courthouse.

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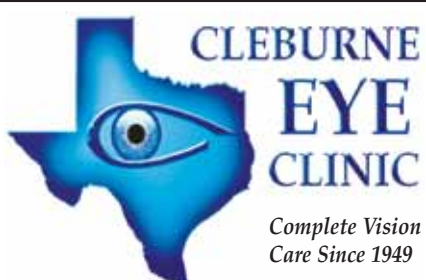


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