



Youngsters may not recognize it, but school nurses provide a valuable service that can make a school day injury much easier to handle.

School Nurses Are Often Unsung Heroes

School nurses do much more than apply bandages to playground scrapes. School nurses conduct vital health screenings and are often the security blanket for students who need special care during school hours. Despite all they do, school nurses are often the unsung heroes within the school community.

School nurses certainly tackle their share of fevers, nosebleeds, cuts, and scrapes, but nurses play other pivotal roles as well, calling up moms and dads to pick up their sick

sons and daughters, overseeing the school's health policies and helping to ensure a safe school environment for students. In addition, the role of the school nurse has changed dramatically over the years. A school nurse may oversee vaccination schedules. He or she also may arrange for assemblies regarding "change of life" seminars for children about to enter puberty. When there is an epidemic at the school, the nurse is often charged with notifying staff and parents and helping to contain the situ-

ation.

Apart from all of the tasks in treating "sick" children, nurses also are essential in helping to keep children with life-threatening diseases healthy while they are at school. The number of children with serious allergies, diabetes, asthma, and even seizure disorders has increased. According to the American Diabetes Association, roughly 1 in every 400 children and adolescents has diabetes. School nurses may help administer life-saving insulin shots to children who need them.

According to Anaphylaxis Canada, 1 in 50 Canadian children has a peanut allergy, and about 1 to 2 percent of these can have severe or life-threatening reactions. School nurses may treat serious allergic reactions or provide a safe place where children with serious allergies can eat lunch.

In some cases, school nurses become a mediator between home and school. Nurses may indirectly be teaching students as well. Each time the nurse treats a condition, he or she may be educating students on

how to avoid that situation in the future. For example, a nurse may impart the importance of eating breakfast to avoid a morning headache or teach youngsters about the benefits of stretching before diving into physical education class.

School nurses are often the unsung heroes of a school, wiping away tears when youngsters suffer an injury at school and acting as a reassuring voice when such injuries are painful.

How to recognize if your child has a vision problem



Parents want their kids to be as healthy as possible. Whether tailoring kids' diets to include healthier foods or encouraging their youngsters to be physically active, parents often go the extra mile with regards to the health of their children.

But as hard as parents may try, some health-related issues are difficult to avoid or prevent. For example, even the most conscientious parents might have little influence over their children's

vision. Many children have a form of myopia, commonly known as nearsightedness, which progressively worsens as kids get older but eventually stabilizes when their eyes have stopped growing, typically in a young adult's early 20s. Myopia is common and treatable, but parents should still educate themselves about it so they can better respond should they suspect their child is suffering from nearsightedness.

What causes myopia?

When a person has myopia, light entering his or her eye is focused incorrectly. Nearsighted people usually have an eyeball that is slightly longer than normal from front to back, and the light rays that make up the

images a nearsighted person sees focus in front of the retina instead of directly on it. The result is that objects that are far away appear blurry.

Are there indicators that a child is nearsighted?

Kids likely won't tell their parents that they are struggling to see distant objects clearly, so it's important for parents to look for indicators that a child might be struggling with myopia. Kids who are nearsighted might squint to see objects that are far away, including the television.

One of the telltale indicators is how a child behaves in the classroom. Children who tell their teacher they need to move closer to the chalkboard should be taken to the eye doctor. Parents who suspect their child might be nearsighted can talk to their child's teacher

and ask if the teacher feels the child might be struggling with his or her vision. Such struggles can affect how a child performs in school.

Children who get frequent headaches might also be suffering from nearsightedness.

Doctors recommend that kids have their eyes examined at six months, three years of age and prior to entering the first grade. But even if kids have passed previous eye examinations at each of those benchmarks, it's best to take them for another exam the moment a vision problem is suspected.

Is myopia preventable?

Since it is often inherited, myopia is not preventable. However, treatment can significantly minimize its effects. Children who appear to be struggling to see distant objects clearly should be taken for an eye exam.

That exam may include an eye pressure measurement; a refraction test, which is used to determine a correct prescription for eyeglasses; a retinal examination and a visual acuity test, which measures sharpness of vision at close and far distances.

When a child is diagnosed as being nearsighted, the doctor will likely prescribe eyeglasses or contact lenses. LASIK surgery can correct vision, but many surgeons are reticent to recommend such surgery until a patient's eye has fully developed, which does not occur until after childhood.

Are there other symptoms of childhood vision problems?

There are additional symptoms of childhood vision problems that might not indicate nearsightedness, but might indicate another

problem that should result in a trip to the eye doctor. For example, a child might close one eye when watching television or reading. This could be indicative that vision in one eye is poorer than the other.

Young children who struggle to color within the lines might have an issue with their hand-eye coordination. Poor hand-eye coordination could be the result of a vision impairment.

Children who tilt their head to one side to improve vision might be suffering from a vision problem that makes it difficult for them to look directly down.

Vision problems can negatively affect how a child performs in school as well as in social situations. Though such vision problems are not always preventable, parents who can identify them can greatly minimize their effects.

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