

What is a “refraction?” Why do I (or my child) need one?

- A refraction is the process or examination of the eyes, to determine what, if any, prescription is needed to improve your eye sight
- It is performed during a comprehensive eye exam, either for routine purposes, as a follow up or for mandated school screening exams
- Refraction is a required part of the Illinois mandated Kindergarten school exam
- From a standard of care perspective, refraction is considered a critical portion of the eye exam, for adults and especially children

Why do we refract children?

- To rule-out what are called “refractive errors;” myopia, hyperopia and/or astigmatism
- To help them see more clearly in the event that glasses are needed
- To help straighten out crossed eyes (lazy eye)
- Very important: to identify amblyogenic conditions (Poor vision caused by abnormal development of visual areas of the brain in response to abnormal visual stimulation during early life) that are not casually obvious to parents, child, teacher, or pediatrician. If these cases are not identified and treated, the amblyopia will become permanent and vision loss in the eye will be permanent; the vision loss in an eye can be severe
- **If children are not refracted cases of amblyopia may go undetected which can lead to permanent vision loss, which can be severe**

There are exceptions when we might not perform refraction on a new patient:

- Premature infants that come in for special exams
- Acute situations, such as conjunctivitis or corneal abrasion or other trauma
- In any of these situations, we advise the patient to return after the acute problem is resolved for completion of the exam with refraction.

Why do most insurance companies not cover this procedure?

- The CMS (Medicare) benefits guide specifically excludes this service, as it is not considered a medical procedure, and the majority of private insurance companies follow this position
- Given that Medicare excludes refractions as a benefit to its members; most insurance companies follow Medicare’s lead. We will bill your insurance, but you will be responsible for any balance