

Meigs Health Matters: Prevent Blindness Ohio: Prevent Blindness and Preserve Sight

March 11, 2024

The Meigs County Health Department (MCHD) is a Vision Care Outreach Partner of Prevent Blindness Ohio (PBO). What does that mean, you may ask. It means that if you are a resident of Ohio who has no vision insurance coverage, you should reach out to the MCHD to be screened for program eligibility. You will be asked a series of questions and asked your household income. If program criteria are met, you will receive a voucher from Prevent Blindness Ohio to have a free vision exam and free glasses if you need them. This program applies to both adults and children. These exams are donated by specific optometrists across the state of Ohio. Meigs County residents are usually seen in Meigs, Gallia or Athens County. You may also call your county health department if you are outside Meigs County as many local health departments are Vision Care Outreach Partners of PBO.

Prevent Blindness Ohio recommends that everyone receive a comprehensive eye exam through dilated pupils regularly as recommended by your eye doctor. According to PBO, any changes in the appearance of your eyes or vision should be investigated further. Some examples include abnormal, non-emergency changes, such as:

- Unusual trouble adjusting to dark rooms
- Difficulty focusing on near or distant objects
- Squinting or blinking due to unusual sensitivity to light or glare
- Change in color of iris
- Red-rimmed, encrusted or swollen lids
- Recurrent pain in or around eyes
- Double vision
- Dark spot at the center of viewing
- Lines and edges appear distorted or wavy
- Excess tearing or “watery eyes”
- Dry eyes with itching or burning
- Seeing spots, ghost-like images

Other changes may be indications of potentially serious problems that might require emergency medical attention and are considered an emergency, such as:

- Sudden loss of vision in one eye
- Sudden hazy or blurred vision
- Flashes of light or black spots

- Halos or rainbows around light
- Curtain-like blotting out of vision
- Loss of peripheral (side) vision

In children, it can be more difficult to tell there is a problem right away; however, if one or more of these signs of possible eye problems appear, PBO states take your child to an eye doctor right away. These signs include:

What do your child's eyes look like?

- Eyes don't line up; one eye appears crossed or looks out!
- Eyelids are red-rimmed, crusted or swollen
- Eyes are watery or red (inflamed)

How does your child act?

- Rubs eyes a lot
- Closes or covers one eye
- Tilts head or thrusts head forward
- Has trouble reading or doing other close-up work, or holds objects close to eyes to see
- Blinks more than usual or seems cranky when doing close-up work
- Things are blurry or hard to see
- Squints eyes or frowns

In addition to the above, PBO addresses many areas to consider about vision. Some of these include: risk of vision problems, health insurance and your eyes, Medicare benefits and your eyes, preventing eye injuries, wearing contact lenses, protecting your eyes from the sun (and solar eclipses), first aid for eye emergencies, nutrition supplements and vision, and taking eye drop medications. Many other eye related topics and resources are available at <https://ohio.preventblindness.org/>.

The Meigs County Health Department also has a program for children through ODH that helps with transportation to/from vision appointments. Funding for this program is limited, so the service is first come, first serve. We also have an individual who can perform adult vision screenings, which is by appointment only. The final program we host is Children with Medical Handicaps (CMH). Also income-based, this program will help diagnose and treat certain eye problems in individuals birth through age 23. For more information on CMH, call Angie Rosler, RN at 740-992-6626. For the other programs discussed, call me at 740-992-6626. You may also visit the MCHD website at www.meigs-health.com or visit our Facebook page titled "Meigs County Health Department."

Leanne Cunningham,
Director of Nursing

