PATIENT & CAREGIVER EDUCATION

How to Get Your Child Ready for Their Ophthalmology Clinic Visit

This information explains how to get your child ready for their ophthalmology (aaf-thal-MAA-luh-jee) clinic visit. In this resource, the words “you” and “your” refer to you or your child.

How to help your child get ready

Helping your child get ready for their visit is very important. Children do not like surprises at the doctor’s office. Letting them know what to expect can help ease some of their fear and anxiety. This section explains ways to help your child get ready for their visit.

Before your visit

Talk with a child life specialist

A child life specialist is a trained professional who is an expert in child development. They can guide you through helping your child get ready for their visit. You can call them at 212-639-8285.

Talk with your child’s care team

Think about which parts of the visit might be hard for your child. Talk with your child’s care team about your concerns. They can help make a plan to support your child.

Practice relaxation exercises

Relaxation exercises can help your child relax when they are feeling nervous. They can practice taking deep breaths or have something to squeeze when they are scared. Your child life specialist can teach your child exercises they can do

to help them relax during their visit.

Write down your questions

Think of any questions you or your child have for your nurses, doctor, or child life specialist. Write them down on a notepad and bring the notepad with you on the day of your visit. This can help you remember to ask your questions.

Read your child books about going to the doctor

Reading children's books about doctor visits can help your child know what to expect. It can also help your child talk about how they feel about being a patient. Some examples include:

- Elmo Goes to the Doctor by Sarah Albee
- Baby Medical School: My Doctor's Visit by Cara and Jon Florance
- We're Going to the Doctor by Campbell Books

Talk with your child about what they can expect

Use simple words to explain the visit. Here are some examples:

- "You will get wet drops into your eyes. The drops help the doctor see all the parts of your eye."
- "It's OK to feel nervous or afraid. Let's talk about some ways to help you feel calm."
- "Everyone is here to help make you feel better."

If your child is having their eye exam with anesthesia (medication that makes you sleep), show them a picture of the exam room (see Figure 1).

You can also say:

- "You will fall asleep using a sleeping medicine. You will get the medicine through a mask that will go on your face. The mask may be a little smelly, but there is nothing that is going to hurt you."



Figure 1. The exam room

The day of your visit

Remember that your child may not act as they normally do during their visit. They may feel nervous, scared, or angry. Try to be patient with them if they act out. Your care team is here to support you and your child.

Here are some things you can bring with you on the day of your visit to help your child:

- Your child's favorite stuffed animal, toy, pacifier, or any other comfort item.
- Snacks or a bottle for your child for after their visit.
- A stroller. Your child's vision may be blurry after their visit so it may be easier to use a stroller.
- A notepad to take notes during your visit.
- A phone or iPad so your child can play their favorite show or song. This will help them feel comfortable during their visit. You can also ask your care

team to play a show on the office TV.

After your visit

- Give your child something to look forward to after their visit. For example, you can do a fun activity or give them a small prize.

What to expect at your visit

A child life specialist will meet with you and your child at the start of your visit. They will talk with your child about their visit, keep them calm and relaxed, and do activities with them. Your child life specialist is here to help you. You and your child can ask them any questions you have. The child life specialist will support you and your child throughout the visit.

After meeting with the child life specialist, your nurse will come get you and your child to check their height, weight, and blood pressure. Your child will take an eye exam by reading the letters, numbers, or pictures on an eye chart. The nurses may ask your child to cover their eyes one at a time to test each eye.

Eye tests

Next, your nurse will use a machine to check if your child needs prescription eyeglasses. This machine is called an autorefractor. There are 2 types of autorefractors in the clinic. You will be able to be with your child throughout this process.

- One type of autorefractor looks like a camera. Your nurse will hold it up as if they are taking a picture of your child. The autorefractor will flash lights and makes sounds, like birds chirping, as it scans your child's eyes. Your child will look directly at the lights just as they would with a regular camera.
- The other type of autorefractor is a machine that your child will look into. Your child will sit in a chair, place their chin on the chin rest, and rest their forehead on the bar in front of the machine. When they are ready, they will look through the lenses on the machine and see different pictures. The pictures will turn blurry and then clear as the machine scans your child's eyes.

For both types of autorefractors, your child will need to sit as still as possible.

Eye drops

Next, your nurse will place 1 to 2 eye drops in your child's eyes. This will help dilate (widen) their pupils (dark dot in the center of the eye). This makes it easier for their doctor to see all parts of their eye. These drops will make their vision blurry for a few hours so they may need help walking out of the hospital. You may want to use a stroller, if possible.

Having your eye exam with anesthesia

Some children may need anesthesia (medication to make them sleepy) for their visit. This section explains what you can expect during your visit if your child is getting anesthesia.

If your child is having their eye exam with anesthesia, it is important they follow the eating and drinking instructions your nurse sent you. If you have any questions, talk with your healthcare provider.

After your child gets eye drops, you and your child will go to the procedure room. Your child life specialist will talk with your child about anesthesia and what they can expect.

Your child will lie down on the exam table. The doctor will place the anesthesia mask over their mouth and nose. You will be in the exam room with your child until they fall asleep. The exam will take 15 to 30 minutes. It may take longer if your child needs to have other exams or treatment done. If this is the case, your doctor will talk with you before the exam or treatment.

When the exam is over, the anesthesia will take 15 to 30 minutes to wear off. Your child may feel sad or annoyed until the anesthesia is out of their body. They can slowly go back to their normal diet.

After speaking with the doctor, you and your child will be able to go home.

Having your eye exam without anesthesia

Some children can do their eye exam without anesthesia. They may be nervous, especially if it's their first visit. It's important that we all be patient with them during their visit. If the exam is done without anesthesia, you will be able to be with your child the entire time.

After your child gets eye drops, a technician will use a machine to take pictures of your child's eyes (see Figure 2). The machine is called an Optos® machine. Your child will look into the machine and see green, red, and blue lights. They will need to stay still and try not to blink as they look at the lights. When the machine is ready to take the picture, it will flash a bright light. Your child will not feel any pain during this exam.

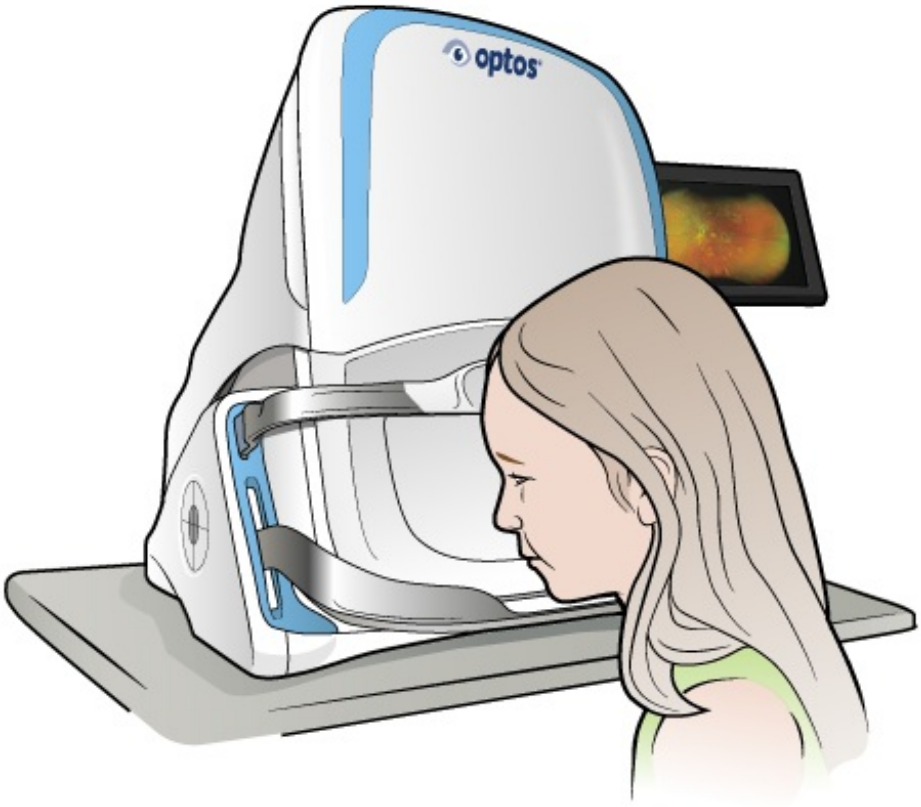


Figure 2. The Optos machine

If your child also needs an ultrasound scan, you and your child will go to the exam room. Your nurse will place cold jelly on your child's eyelids. They will use the ultrasound probe, which is shaped like a wand, and rub it around your child's eye. The probe will scan and take pictures of your child's eyes. Your child will

feel slight pressure, but no pain.

After the ultrasound, you will meet with your doctor. They will check your child's eyes while wearing a headlamp and talk about the next steps with you.

Contact Information

If you have any questions or concerns, contact your ophthalmology care team. You can reach them Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. at 212-639-7232. You can also email us at surophonc@mskcc.org.

If you are a patient at Memorial Sloan Kettering and you need to reach a healthcare provider after 5 p.m., during the weekend, or on a holiday, call 212-639-2000.

You also can send a message to your care team through MSK MyChart, our patient portal. Your care team gets MSK MyChart messages from Monday to Friday. If you send your message on a weekend, they'll see it on Monday. To learn more, read *Communicating With Your Care Team: When to Call or Use MSK MyChart* (www.mskcc.org/pe/communicating-using-mychart).

For more resources, visit www.mskcc.org/pe to search our virtual library.

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