

NSW HEALTH STATEWIDE EYESIGHT PRESCHOOLER SCREENING (StEPS) PROGRAM

NSW Health StEPS program is a universal, evidenced based program that offers visual acuity screening to all 4 year old children in NSW prior to school entry. The program's aim is to identify childhood vision problems early so that treatment outcomes can be maximised. The StEPS program is an important component of the NSW Personal Health Record (Blue Book) 4 year old child health check.

Children can receive a StEPS visual acuity test when StEPS screeners visit the child's preschool or early childhood centre, or at a NSW Health Child & Family Health Service or a catchup StEPS clinic.

For children due to start school next year, Local Health District StEPS Coordinators can help organise free vision acuity testing. The contact details for the StEPS Coordinator in your area can be found on the [NSW Health StEPS website](#)

SUGGESTED PROTOCOL FOR 4 YEAR OLD VISION SCREENING

For children who are unable to access StEPS screening, General Practitioners and Practice Nurses may wish to provide vision screening using the following protocol:

1. Observe for red eye, watery eye, ptosis, head tilt
2. Assess for strabismus and ophthalmoplegia: do both eyes move together equally in all directions of gaze?
3. Select an appropriate vision chart (eg 6m or 3m HOTV logMAR chart) and matching card with letters / shapes matching those on the vision chart. Keep the chart covered prior to testing so that the child cannot memorise the letters / shapes on the chart.
4. Ensure that the child is seated at the correct distance from the vision chart
5. **Test one eye at a time.** The other eye is occluded with an eye patch or occlusion glasses.
6. Start at the top of the vision chart. Point to one letter / shape from each line, asking the child to point to the matching letter / shape on their card, until you reach the 6/9 line. If the child stumbles, return to that line and point to every letter / shape on that line.
7. Record the results of vision screening in the child's Personal Health Record (Blue Book)

A video demonstrating an example of a StEPS visual acuity test can be found at https://nswhealth.seerightsolutions.com.au/public_content/HETICP/HETI/StEPS_Video_Storyline%20Output/story.html

REFERRAL CRITERIA FOR FURTHER DIAGNOSTIC ASSESSMENT

VISUAL ACUITY	RECOMMENDED MANAGEMENT
6/9 or above in both eyes (vision within normal limits for age)	Referral is not required
6/9-1 or 6/9-2 in one or both eyes	Re-test visual acuity in 12 months
Less than 6/9-2 in one or both eyes	Referral to an eye health professional
6/18 or less in one or both eyes	<i>High priority</i> referral to an eye health professional. Your local StEPS Coordinator can assist with facilitating a rapid referral to a NSW Health Paediatric Ophthalmic Clinic (if available) or an eye health professional.

A high priority referral to an eye health professional would also be appropriate should there be other findings of concern on vision screening, such as (but not limited to) red eye with reduced vision, ptosis, head tilt, strabismus, and ophthalmoplegia.