

Our Health - Our Lives

Lorry Kaye's Question of the Week

Q Dear Lorry, My husband is a Vietnam veteran. Other than his alcoholism, (he's been sober for 18 years) he didn't seem to have a lot of other problems until about four years ago. He became increasingly irritable, started having nightmares and didn't want to leave home. He was always quiet but he got even more withdrawn. To make a long story short, he couldn't work, was eventually admitted to the VA hospital, and was diagnosed with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. He still goes to a weekly veterans group. He didn't used to talk about his war experiences but now sometimes a sound or a scene in a movie will remind him of something that happened in Vietnam. He tells me about it with such detail it's like it just happened yesterday. I used to say stuff like "why are you thinking about that?" or "it's better if you put that out of your mind". I know that's not very supportive so that's why I'm writing. What can I say or do to help him?

— Vets Wife

A Dear Vets Wife, What you can do is feel honored that he can talk to you, that he trusts you and is safe enough to reveal what he went through. Part of his healing is unlocking those memories, talking about them and knowing he's not alone with them. If it's hard for you to hear the details just remember what it must have been like to live them. Having said that it is important for you to know your capacity for hearing the trauma he is sharing with you. It won't help if hearing his memories causes secondary trauma to you. It sounds like your husband has had some treatment or is actively involved in it. Have you considered seeing a counselor to help you better understand PTSD and how to cope with the effect it has on your relationship? It may be the best way for you to help your husband and yourself. If you have access to the Internet and want to find a counselor or want more information about traumatic stress go to www.dva.va.gov and click on PTSD.

Don't forget to love yourself as well as your husband.

— Lorry Kaye, MA, LMHC

Lorry Kaye, MA, LMHC has been working in the fields of youth & family counseling, mental health therapy and parent education for 20 years. She can help you solve parenting and family dilemmas. You can ask a question anonymously by writing to:

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Sooner is better, when it comes to infants' vision

By Judith Lee

At a time when most parents focus closely on their baby's or toddler's health, they should be sure to focus on their child's visual development, advise two Duvall eye doctors who specialize in family vision care.

"In a recent survey, 97% of mothers said they do everything they can to ensure their children's health, but only 13% had taken their child under age 2 for a thorough eye check-up," notes Suzan Grimm, O.D., of Duvall Advanced Family Eyecare.

Dr. Grimm, and her husband Brad, also an optometric physician, are so concerned about infants' vision, they offer a no-cost vision assessment to babies aged 6 to 12 months (available to all families, regardless of income). This one-time assessment is part of the InfantSEETM program endorsed by the American Optometric Association.

"Now we know that the first year of life is one of the most critical stages of visual development -- and will have a lasting impact on vision, learning, and performance in school. Through early eye exams we can detect potential vision problems early and take steps to ensure your child achieves the best possible vision," Dr. Grimm says.

Early detection of amblyopia, often called "lazy eye," is critical. If a child does not learn to see properly with both eyes, he or she may actually lose vision in an eye that is difficult or impossible to restore at a later age.

The official spokespersons for the InfantSEE program are former President Jimmy Carter and his wife, Rosalyn. Two of their grandchildren suffered from amblyopia; their grandson's wasn't detected until grade school, and may never be fully corrected.

Dr. Grimm says children of all ages need regular eye examinations, even if vision problems haven't been apparent. If your children are pre-schoolers, they should see an eye doctor at age three and again at age five, before entering kindergarten. School-age children should be examined every year.

The Drs. Grimm are well-equipped to examine children in their newly expanded office on Main St. in Duvall. Using the latest technology, the doctors can accurately and painlessly measure vision and eye health even before a child can talk, walk or read. The kid-friendly environment makes it fun even for small fry, says Dr. Grimm. The appointment is always scheduled for the child's "best" time of day. Plenty

of time is allowed to establish a comfort level, and infants and toddlers sit on a parent's lap for the exam.

"Dr. Brad or myself conducts the exam with lights, finger puppets and toys to make sure the baby's eyes are working together, and there's nothing that will interfere with proper vision development. Advanced vision testing techniques tell us exactly how well the child is seeing, even if he or she is too young to respond to our questions," says Dr. Grimm.

Drs. Suzan and Brad Grimm offer these guidelines for parents:

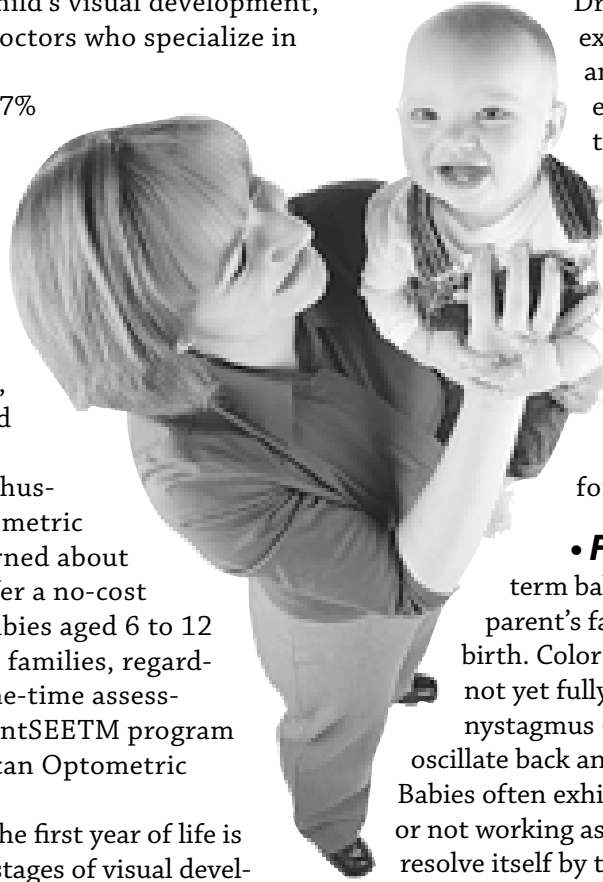
• **First three months** — Full-term babies should be able to see their parent's facial expression within a week of birth. Color vision and depth perception are not yet fully developed. A condition called nystagmus (eyes that jump, dance, wiggle or oscillate back and forth) can develop in infancy. Babies often exhibit eyes turned in, turned out or not working as a team. If this problem doesn't resolve itself by the age of three or four months, consult your eye care practitioner.

• **Four to six months** — Your child should start to reach or bat at the mobile or toys you hold in front of him or her.

• **Six to eight months** — Your child will roll over and may learn to crawl. Entice him or her visually with a toy to gain by rolling over or moving a few inches.

• **Eight to 12 months** — Closely supervise your crawler or early walker while on the couch, near steps or on the bed. Remember that depth perception is still maturing, so tumbles on uneven surfaces are common. Children won't understand that the steps lead down, or the edge of the bed leads off into empty space.

• **Pre-schoolers** — Parents should suspect vision problems when a child sits too close to the TV or holds a book too close, squints, tilts the head, frequently rubs eyes, is sensitive to light, or closes one eye to read, watch TV or see better.



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