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Student Vision Problems Often Not Diagnosed

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LOS ANGELES -- New studies show one quarter of grade school students have vision problems, yet most of them never take a vision test.

Some of them wind up being misdiagnosed with other problems.

NBC4's Dr. Bruce Hensel said the study is crucial because vision problems can cause lifelong issues if not addressed early.



Hensel said it could all be prevented with some simple steps.

Dexter Stark was held back from school for a year because he was having trouble reading and playing sports.

"When I started reading books I wasn't good at it. I didn't want to do it," said Stark.

Hensel said that it turns out there was nothing wrong with Dexter's learning abilities, or his behavior. He just couldn't keep his eyes on the page.

Vision problems are often hard to catch in children because they can't tell if something's not right, according to Hensel.

As a result, many children like Dexter are thought to have ADD, or other problems.

"They act out because they're not comfortable in a classroom setting. Many of these children are also misdiagnosed as having a learning problem, when it's really a treatable vision problem," said Dr. Elise Brisco.

Optometrist Dr. Elise Brisco said vision problems cannot be diagnosed by looking at a standard eye chart. If a child has poor handwriting and drawing skills, difficulty catching a ball, or maintaining eye contact they could have a vision problem.

Dexter has been going through vision therapy where he works on eye muscle control and coordination. Now he tracks better, judges distance better, and uses his eyes as a team.

The earlier the problem is caught, the better.

Hensel said to have your child checked by the eye doctor at the start of school and every two years thereafter.

Web sites:

- [EyeHelp](#)
- [American Optometric Association](#)

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