

# GUIDELINES TO PARENTS ON INTRODUCING GLASSES TO YOUNG CHILDREN

By Tanni Anthony

The experience of learning that your child needs glasses can be an emotional one. It is not always easy to learn that your little one will be wearing glasses. The good news, however, are those glasses can make a positive difference in your child's eyesight. This is very good news as it means that your child will have an opportunity to expand his or her world, a chance to see better, and get information in a more efficient manner. Over the years of working with families, the following ideas have been presented as helpful guidelines to parents on the process of introducing glasses to their young child. As far as new glasses are concerned, there are two critical components to check before you begin the process of encouraging your child to wear them.

## 1. The frames must fit correctly.

Some glasses, especially those for aphakia (eyes without lenses due to cataract surgery) can be heavy for young children. The style of the glasses will be important and you may choose a head strap to help evenly distribute the weight of the lenses. Be sure that the glasses do not pinch the child's nose or ears. Monitor the fit to be sure that there are no red marks which may eventually turn into a skin irritation.

## 2. The lenses must be the correct prescription.

An inaccurate prescription is not a common problem, but one that should be assessed, if the child does not tolerate wearing the glasses. To have the prescription checked, take the glasses to the optician or the eye doctor who can determine the optical accuracy of the prescription in the lenses against the perspective needs of the child.

Most children will accept their new glasses once they learn that the world looks better to them with the glasses than without the glasses. The goal is to provide them with enough wearing experience that they have an opportunity to discover this information. Recommendations about new glasses include the following guidelines:

The only hands that put on and remove the glasses should be adult hands. If the child takes them off, be sure that you put them back on - and when appropriate, you take them off. As soon as the child learns that (s)he has control over the glasses, you may lose the battle. Eventually your child may have the maturity to take over this responsibility, but in the beginning it is better to have adult control so that the glasses do not become a plaything or an attention getting tool.

Begin with small increments of wearing time and gradually build up the child's wearing tolerance. Choose a time when the child is rested and in a good mood. Be prepared to "tap dance" a little while to keep the child occupied long enough to distract him/her from removing the glasses. Select a highly motivating activity that the child enjoys when introducing the glasses. When the child removes the glasses, stop the activity. Resume the activity when the glasses are back in place.

Make the glasses part of the child's daily routine. Put them on in the morning as you dress your child and take them before nap time and bed-time. This is a nice area to explore as far as using the small increments of time. for example, begin with putting the glasses on in the morning as a part of the dressing routine and keep them on for as long as the child tolerates. . . then build to a longer period of time the next day etc.

See how it goes, be patient but firm.