



Parents should be aware of the potential harm of the Nintendo 3DS, says optical expert

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Optical expert Karen Sparrow, from the Association of Optometrists (AOP), comments that Nintendo is right to warn people about the potential health risks attached to the company's new 3D game release - the 3DS King's Console.

Ms Sparrow, optometrist and Education Advisor at the AOP, said: "This is not unique to the Nintendo 3DS as watching 3D images through other means, such as at the cinema or on a 3D television could give rise to the same concerns, however there are two additional factors when using the 3DS. The close proximity of the device could place more stress on eyesight than looking at a television set, meaning that eyes have to focus harder, and it is more likely to be used by children for longer periods.

"The short-term effects are the same for adults and children, such as headaches and double vision. However, children's eyesight is developing rapidly in the early years, usually reaching its full potential by the age of around five or six, although new research shows that the children's eyesight can remain flexible into their teens.

"Children need a clear, sharp image in each eye in order for their vision to develop properly. If anything upsets that balance (natural or artificial) it could affect the visual development resulting in 'amblyopia' (lazy eye) or a squint.

"3D technology could also highlight problems parents would otherwise miss. If a child cannot see in 3D it is a prompt to take them to the Opticians. In fact, anyone who cannot see the 3D effect, or experiences side-effects after watching 3D, should get their eyes tested to rule out any underlying vision problems.

"As with anything else - children should not use the 3DS to excess. Children need to develop social, motor and communication skills and this is best achieved by a diverse range of activities. Similar to adults using computer screens at work, a sensible regime would be to have a break of five minutes after an hour's use.

"As 3D technology has only recently hit the High Street there is little scientific research available yet but Nintendo is right to warn the public of the potential harm of excessive use."

Ends

For more information, please contact Anne Grenyer, AOP PR Manager, annegrenyer@aop.org.uk or 020 7401 5316.

Notes to Editors

Nintendo 3DS

The following warning is on Nintendo's website:

WARNING: The use of the 3D feature by children aged six and under may cause vision damage.

Therefore it is recommended that:

- Only children over six should use the system in 3D mode.
- If children aged six and under have access to the system, parents or legal guardians should restrict the display of 3D images using the Parental Controls feature.

http://www.nintendo.co.uk/NOE/en_GB/nintendo_3ds_23802.html

The Association of Optometrists

The Association of Optometrists (AOP) represents individual optometrists in negotiations with government and other organisations. It also promotes the profession and development of high professional and clinical standards.

Optical Confederation - The voice of UK optics

The Optical Confederation – The voice of UK optics was launched in April 2010 to bring together the voices of the representative bodies within the optical profession to speak with a united voice for patients, professionals and the sector. The Confederation is committed to greater cohesion for the five optical bodies: the Association of British Dispensing Opticians (ABDO); The Association of Contact Lens Manufacturers (ACLM); the Association of Optometrists (AOP); the Federation of Manufacturing Opticians (FMO) and the Federation of Ophthalmic and Dispensing Opticians (FODO).

The Government and the optical professions within and associated with the Optical Confederation are all signatories to the UK Vision Strategy to ensure eye health for all. This strategy sets out how eye care services can be improved, and was developed in response to the World Health Assembly VISION 2020 resolution, to eliminate avoidable sight loss by the year 2020. For more information, see the Vision 2020 website www.vision2020uk.org.uk/UKVisionstrategy/