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**KNOW
BEST!**



KIDS EYEWEAR:

Children KNOW BEST!

Cover Story

By JoAnne Sommers

When it comes to eyewear, today's children are both seen and heard. Kids know what they want and they're not shy about expressing it. And if they're smart, parents and eyecare professionals (ECPs) are paying close attention.

"Children have much more influence on eyewear purchasing decisions than ever before," says Beverly Suliteanu, creative director and vice president of product development for WestGroupe.

Durability used to be the primary focus of kids' eyewear but fashion has become a much more important consideration in the past two years, she says.

"Children are adamant about wanting what their peers and idols have and if they dislike their glasses they simply won't wear them."

Kids are often the pickiest consumers because they're highly trend-conscious and want to look like adults, especially their parents, says Josh Wyman, marketing coordinator with Ogi Eyewear.

"The Ogi Kid's collection bridges the gap between fun and functional with frames that emulate those worn by adults. Today's children are the fashion enthusiasts of tomorrow and Ogi is looking to give them a head start."

Tastes have changed a lot in recent years. Gone are teddy bears, balloons and happy faces; in

their place are cool, trendy-looking frames with an emphasis on fun colours and shapes.

V. Design's Kids collection from Concept Eyewear has taken children's eyewear to a whole new level with multi-dimensional frames that kids are excited to wear, says President Pille Annist. "They have the "cool" factor and the ability to express the child's individuality," she says.

The collection combines unexpected, unique shapes and extravagant temple details with bright, fun colours, such as white with bright purple and turquoise with orange.

"This assertive, upscale eyewear line mimics V.Design adult frames," says Annist, who believes there's a growing market for unique, non-mainstream children's frames. "They're perfect for a child or parents who are looking for something playful, fresh and stylish."

The frames are also very sturdy, which is essential with children's eyewear, she adds. "Quality is key because kids are so hard on their glasses."

Children's optical eyewear poses a major challenge for eyewear producers because the fit, weight and performance must be right to ensure that it fulfills its medical purpose while withstanding great stress. It must also look good to persuade children to wear it.

adidas kids' eyewear offers visual appeal combined with convincing functional performance. Very light, yet robust, it adjusts to the wearer's face thanks to soft nose pads that prevent pressure points and ensure a comfortable fit. Flexible temples always return to the correct starting position and a non-slip rubber coating on the inside of the temples ensures a secure grip.

Lafont pour les enfants from Lafont Co. offers glasses specifically designed for children's faces, says Brand Manager Kristin Calimlim. That's important because children's faces are shaped differently than those of adults.

"Lafont frames enable the eyecare professional to fit each one to the specific morphology of the child," she explains. "Our glasses are the most optically sound for kids because they're designed for a child's view of the world. The lens area is above the eyebrow because kids are always looking up."

Thanks to growing awareness of the importance of protecting children's eyes, kids' eyewear is becoming an increasingly lucrative market, says Amanda Grant, communications director with Rudy Project.

"Consumers understand that eyewear is not just for looks," she notes. "It provides protection against cataracts and growths on the eye, including cancer, which is why it's so important to start protecting the eyes with sunglasses early in life. Rudy Project understands this and we've designed our ROB sunglass specifically to fit the faces of children and smaller-faced adults."

The ROB is a very lightweight sunglass designed to fit small faces, making it ideal for children and smaller women. "Comfort is key with sunwear - whether for children or adults," says Grant. And weighing in at less than 0.78 oz., "the ROB is so comfortable you barely know it's there."

It is also fully Rx-able and comes in a variety of bright, fun colours that appeal to even the most discerning young customer.

TIPS FOR ECPs

Here are some suggestions for ECPs who want to grow their children's eyewear practices:

- Don't talk down to kids, says Westgroupe's Bev Suliteanu. Involve them in the buying process by asking about their favorite colours and find out what they like or dislike about particular frames. Be guided by their answers.
- Create a kid-friendly environment. Roberts & Brown recently renovated, adding a large, colourful, interactive kids' rug, rainbow-coloured frame bars and vanity mirrors shaped like giant pairs of kids' glasses.
- Take time to explain things to parents and answer their questions, says Sheena Taff, manager of Roberts & Brown Opticians in Vancouver. "They're often worried and overwhelmed when they come in so we want to reassure them by answering all their questions and providing support."
- Good warranties are essential with kids' frames because they undergo so much wear and tear. Make sure the frames you sell are covered by solid warranties and instruct staff not to ask what happened to a pair of broken glasses if they're returned. You don't want to make either kids or parents feel bad about it.
- Discuss the importance of proper sunwear and sports goggles with parents. "Some kids lose their vision due to injuries," Taff warns. "That's why it's important to educate parents about the benefits of protective eyewear."
- Ask your adult patients whether they have children and if so, ask if their child's eyes have been examined within the last year. Children should have their first eye examination by six months of age and every year thereafter.



| mod. Daisy40A |

Sunoptic

Collection: Zoobug sunwear

Ages: 4-12

Features: 100 percent UV protection.

Key Models:

DaisyChain: features a flexible temple design and robust but soft side, integrated into the temple for excellent comfort and ease-of-wear. In pink, pink/white, dark pink or lilac.

SUPER A: new interpretation of the classic Aviator in six colours: pink or purple for girls, transparent or black for boys. Slightly oversized at the front, features classic double bridge. They offer a snug fit on the sides and around the ears. In lilac/flower, pink/flower, red/flower, blue/stripe, clear/stripe or black/stripe.

BUZZBLING: in purple, pink, black and transparent. Decorated with crystals on either side of the front.

Has Zoobug's ultra-comfortable flexible temple joint.

ZB 9 WAYFARER: in lilac, black, red, red/white, pink, dark blue or lilac.

Warranty: 24-month full replacement.



| mod. ROB |

Rudy Project

Collection: children's sunwear collection consists of five models.

Ages: from 5 and up

Key model: weighing just under 0.78 oz., ROB 2.0 is the newest addition to the casual line. For those with vision correction needs, ROB 2.0 offers a highly refined RX option and broad parameters.

Warranty: Lifetime replacement lens guarantee and 3-year frame warranty.



| mod. 3011 |

Tekā Eyewear

Collection: Huveli Milano

Ages: 10-16, also fit smaller women.

Material: newest, most popular models are full plastic, adjustable, durable and lightweight.

Shapes: round, square and rectangular.

Mainly unisex, some exclusively for boys or girls.

Warranty: 1 year



| mod. SK1030 |

Viva International

Collection: SKECHERS

Ages: 5-10, 11-16

Key Models:

SK 1030 and SK 1031: boys' styles; SK 1030 has a metal rectangular front; SK 1031 an acetate rectangular front.

Both feature recessed horizontal detail; the raised metal SKECHERS "SKX" logo is etched on each temple.

Colours:

SK 1030: matte black/blue, satin brown, satin gunmetal/green

SK 1031: black/blue stripes, brown on orange, grey on black

Girls/Tweens

Colours: pink, magenta, purple

Material: rubber

Shapes: stars, hearts and flowers with glitter and sparkle

Boys/Tweens

Colours: black, gunmetal, blue

Shapes: Metal in half rimless shapes

Warranty: 1 year



| mod. SFK102 |

Westgroupe

Collection: Superflex Kids

Ages: 5-12

Materials: stainless steel and acetate.

Styling direction: fun, funky and bold.

Colours: two-toned fronts and temples. Boys: navy, grey, brown, black. Girls: fuschia, teal, turquoise, red, purple, citrus.

Shapes: for boys softened rectangles and sporty ovals; for girls softened rectangles, cat eyes, modified ovals.

Features: spring hinges and lightweight material.

Warranty: 2 years for manufacturer's defects.