

Orthoptic Department Amblyopia (Lazy Eye) in Children Patient Information for Parents/Carers

What is Amblyopia?

This is often referred to as a '*lazy eye*'. Amblyopia actually means that there is a reduction in vision of one or both eyes. This is caused by an interruption to the visual development during childhood. The eyes are developing from birth up until the age of about seven and it is during this period that the vision can be changed. It is therefore extremely important that any treatment for amblyopia occurs during this time.

Causes of Amblyopia

- Turn in the eye, which is known as strabismus or squint
- Difference in long/short sightedness or astigmatism between the two eyes
- Obstacle blocking visual stimulation to the eye i.e. droopy eyelid or cataract (cloudy lens within the eye)

Treatment of Amblyopia

The usual treatment for amblyopia is to wear a **patch over the good eye** so the child will have to use their lazy eye. The lazy eye is then stimulated and hopefully the vision will start to improve. If there is any long/short sight or astigmatism then glasses will be given first for a period of two months.

The length of time the patch will need to be worn will depend upon the amount of amblyopia present. The poorer the vision the longer the patch will need to be worn. If the amblyopia is left untreated the vision will be permanently impaired.

Unfortunately children do not always understand why they need to patch their good eye and so treatment can sometimes be difficult. It is important to remember that when your child is wearing the patch they are relying on the poorer eye and this may upset them, so give a lot of praise when the patch is worn well, and be ready to distract their attention to prevent the patch being removed.

Doing detailed close work is a good idea when your child is wearing the patch. Activities could include reading, drawing, colouring, computer games and any other activity, which requires concentration.

Your Orthoptist is very experienced in dealing with children who have amblyopia and will be able to advise you about carrying out the treatment at home as effectively as possible.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding the treatment, or run out of patches,

please do not hesitate to contact us during office hours.

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