

Orthoptic Department Squints in Children Patient Information for Parents/Carers

What is a Squint?

A squint is a condition in which the eyes are not straight. In most cases one eye appears to look straight ahead, while the other eye turns inwards, outwards, upwards, downwards or in a combination of these.

👁 Inward turning squint (esotropia)

Example above: Inward turning squint in the left eye (left esotropia)

An inward turning eye is the commonest type of squint in children.

👁 Outward turning squint (exotropia)

Example above: Outward turning squint in the left eye (left exotropia)

👁 A vertical squint is where the eye drifts upwards or downwards.

Example above: An upward (vertical) squint in the left eye.

Treatment of Squint

👁️ Refractive errors

In certain types of squint, wearing of glasses will help to straighten the eyes, avoiding the need for surgery.

👁️ Surgery

If a squint persists in a child who is wearing the prescribed glasses and has had any necessary patching treatment, surgery may be considered to improve the cosmetic appearance by reducing the size of the squint.

In some children, surgery is needed early to help maintain binocular vision.

👁️ Orthoptic exercises

These are useful in a minority of older children where there is an intermittent squint. The child is taught to become aware of the eye position and to control it.

👁️ Observation

Observation of the eye condition may be all that is required for alternating or small angle squints. Most children with eye problems need to continue attending the hospital eye clinic until the visual development is complete at 7 years of age.

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