

Amblyopia (Lazy Eye)

What is amblyopia (lazy eye)?

Amblyopia, commonly known as lazy eye, is a condition where an eye does not develop normal vision, resulting in poor vision that is not correctable with vision aids like glasses or contact lenses.

Causes

Lazy eye is caused by poor development of vision during early childhood. This is often the result of defective transmission of visual images to the brain during its developmental stages.

Anything that interferes with clear vision in either eye during the period between birth to eight years can cause the development of lazy eye because the brain starts to ignore the images seen by the amblyopic eye.

Some common causes are strabismus (squint), abnormally high spectacles power (e.g. astigmatism) short- or long-sightedness or childhood cataracts. Amblyopia (lazy eye) normally affects one eye, but if both eyes are similarly

deprived of clear visual images for sustained periods during childhood, this condition can occur in both eyes. Amblyopia needs to be corrected before the age of eight as after that age, the development of the part of the brain that processes vision is complete. Early diagnosis will increase the chances of successful treatment.

Symptoms

Often, you may not know your child has amblyopia till each eye is tested individually (e.g. during vision screening in school). Alternatively, a child may present with a squint (where one eye appears to be misaligned).

Therefore, you should send your child for an eye examination as early detection is important.

Treatment

To correct amblyopia, your child must be 'forced' to use the lazy eye. This is usually done by patching or covering the good eye for several hours a day, often for weeks or months. If spectacles are required, your child must wear them all the time.

Patching forces the brain to use the lazy eye, enabling it to develop normal vision. The younger the child when treatment starts, the faster the recovery. It is also important that your child be reviewed regularly to monitor the progress of treatment.



The good eye is patched to force the use of the lazy eye.