

What is a lazy eye (amblyopia)?

A lazy eye (amblyopia) is when the ability of each eye to tell apart shapes (numbers, letters or pictures) is not normal. It may affect one or both eyes.

What causes amblyopia?

The causes of amblyopia maybe:

- The eyes seeing blurry images because of a need for glasses
- The eyes not being aligned (a squint).
- The eyes are unable to see light because of something being in the way, for example, a droopy eyelid which covers the pupil or rarely a cataract (in these cases, the obstruction is corrected before amblyopia treatment begins)

How is amblyopia treated?

The first line of treatment is to provide glasses where required. Children are generally given a 'settling-in' period with their glasses before further treatment is considered.

The next phase of treatment uses a patch, covering the 'good' eye, to stimulate the weaker eye. Your orthoptist will advise you which type is most suitable and how long it should be worn for.

It is important to remember that if your child has a squint, the patching treatment is not for the improvement of the squint it's just for their vision.

How long will treatment take?

The length of treatment depends on how well the patch and/or glasses are worn and how well the child's vision responds to the patching. Keeping a diary or record chart of this can be helpful to you and your orthoptist.

Treatment is most effective before the age of 7-8 years of age so it is important to begin treatment as early as possible¹. Some children may continue to improve beyond this age² and your orthoptist will advise if this is appropriate.

¹ Stewart et al. (2004), *Invest Ophthalmol Vis Sci*, 45(9):3048-54

² Mohan et al (2004), *J Pediatr Ophthalmol Strabismus*, 41:89-95

What should my child do while wearing the patch?

We would recommend you engage your child in close activities such as colouring-in, dot-to-dots, reading, puzzles or hand-held computer games if they have them. If your child's vision is very low in their weak eye try playing with brightly coloured toys or drawing with broad pens or crayons.

My child dislikes the patch, what can I do to encourage them to wear it?

Here are some hints and tips that parents often find useful:

- Reward charts; you could create one with your child or your orthoptist may provide one.
- Decorating the patch
- Make it fun - play pirates!
- Keep them busy with activities

- Enlist the help of your child's nursery or teacher, it may well be that there are other children in the class with a patch.
- If at first you don't succeed, try, try again!
- Try: www.theglassesfairy.com for more ideas

Children with low vision should be closely supervised while wearing their patch and your child shouldn't wear the patch while playing outside or for PE.

It is important that you attend the orthoptist clinic for regular check-ups while you are patching. If you find you are struggling or run out of patches, please do contact us:

Orthoptists at
The Practice Group
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A Lazy Eye (Amblyopia)

