

# Fourth Nerve Palsy

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This material will help you understand fourth nerve palsy and how it is treated.

## **What is fourth nerve palsy?**

There are 12 pairs of nerves (cranial nerves) that control most of the functions of the head and neck. These functions include eye movements, swallowing, facial sensation, and other facial movements. One of those nerves is the fourth cranial nerve. The fourth cranial nerve controls a specific eye movement. If this nerve is not functioning properly on one or both sides of the head, it is called a “palsy.” You may experience double vision and the need to tilt your head. A fourth nerve palsy usually only affects one eye, but it can affect both eyes.

## **What causes fourth nerve palsy?**

There are many causes of fourth nerve palsy. In children, the condition is often congenital (present at birth). Sometimes congenital fourth nerve palsy is not discovered until adulthood when aging makes it difficult to keep the eyes lined up. A common cause for adults is head trauma and microvascular ischemia from high blood pressure, diabetes, or high cholesterol. Rare causes include stroke and tumor. In some cases, the exact cause of the condition is unknown.

## **How is fourth nerve palsy treated?**

Your doctor will take a complete medical history and perform an eye exam to investigate the underlying cause for the fourth nerve palsy. You may also need blood tests or imaging tests like an MRI. In many cases, a fourth nerve palsy resolves on its own within 3 months. Your doctor may have you use prisms or patches to help manage double vision. If your fourth nerve palsy does not get better, you may need surgery. For children who are born with fourth nerve palsy, treatment usually involves eye surgery.

**For more information, scan this code with your smartphone or visit the website listed.**



<http://www.aapos.org/terms/conditions/52>

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