

Amblyopia

This material will help you understand your amblyopia and its causes.

What is amblyopia?

Amblyopia, often called a “lazy eye,” occurs when one or both eyes do not develop normal vision during early childhood. The eye with reduced vision is amblyopic. Amblyopia affects 4% of children. It must be treated as early as possible to prevent long term vision loss. After a child is between 6 to 9 years old, treatment is no longer successful.

What causes amblyopia?

There are several causes for amblyopia:

- Crossed eyes (strabismus) – This is the most common cause. When both eyes are not aimed in the same direction, the crossed eye “turns off.” The brain does this to avoid double vision. If the eyes are not both focused on the same object, the child will get double vision. The child then only uses the better eye as it gives a clearer picture of the world. If this continues over time, the crossed eye will not develop good vision.
- Unequal refractive error (anisometropia) – This is the most difficult cause to detect. Amblyopia occurs when one eye has a very different glasses prescription from the other eye. It may also occur when both eyes have very strong glasses prescriptions. If one eye has a very strong glasses prescription and the other eye does not, the eye that needs the stronger prescription will “turn off”. That eye will not develop properly. It will always have poor vision. If a child is born needing very strong glasses prescriptions for both eyes and if he/she does not get glasses early on, neither eye will develop good vision.

- Other less common causes of amblyopia are early childhood eye disorders that prevent an image from being focused clearly on the back of the eye. These can range from a droopy eyelid blocking vision to a cataract or cloudy cornea blocking light from coming into the eye and projecting a clear image.

How is amblyopia treated?

Amblyopia can only be treated during childhood. Unequal refractive error and crossed eyes leading to amblyopia are best treated during the toddler years. Problems that block vision as those listed above need to be treated when children are very young to avoid amblyopia. Once the weaker eye is treated for its vision problem, the stronger eye is patched so that the child is forced to use the weaker eye. Patching is often needed for months or years to develop the best possible vision in the weaker eye.

For more information, scan these codes with your smartphone or visit the websites listed.



<http://www.kellogg.umich.edu/patientcare/conditions/amblyopia.html>



<http://www.geteyesmart.org/eyesmart/diseases/amblyopia-lazy-eye/>

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