

Amblyopia (lazy eye) - Information for Parents

Aim of the leaflet

This leaflet is to provide you with information and advice about amblyopia (lazy eye) to help you understand the condition and treatment.

What is amblyopia?

Amblyopia (lazy eye) is reduced vision in one or both eyes which persists despite any need for glasses being corrected and the appropriate time given to adapt to any glasses.

Squint (misaligned eyes) is another common cause of amblyopia.

The brain and eyes work together to help us to see. When one eye is stronger, the brain prefers that eye and the vision in the other eye begins to get weaker as it gets less stimulation. Amblyopia can occur without the presence of a squint. Patching treatment is not to correct a squint.

If your child's condition is not treated by the age of eight, the amblyopia may be permanent. This may cause your child problems over their lifetime, for example; they may struggle to judge distances, fail to take up certain occupations (e.g. police officer) and over a lifetime, injury or disease may affect the other (good) eye.

The treatment of amblyopia is to cover the good eye to make the lazy eye do more work. This forces the brain to use the lazy eye more which encourages the eyesight to develop. Regular checks with the Orthoptist and/or the Ophthalmologist will be needed to see how the vision is developing, make any changes to the schedule of patching, do routine glasses checks and to advise when to stop patching.

Advice for parents

The patch needs to cover the good eye and your child shouldn't be able to see anything from the good eye. Some children don't like wearing the patch and you have the key role in persuading them how important it is. Getting started is usually the hardest part as most children accept the patching if consistent messages are given to them. They also accept it more as their sight starts to improve in the lazy eye.

Tips

- Regular one-to-one attention while patching works best. It is a good idea to start patching during a quiet weekend when there may be more adult support available.
- Make the patching a routine thing.
- Plenty of positive reinforcement (praise and/or reward) for wearing the patch is usually more successful than negative reinforcement for not wearing it.
- Link patch wearing to activities the child enjoys.
- Use a reward chart, marking each time the child wears the patch as prescribed and then providing a reward (such as a trip out) for a completed month or several weeks.
- Very young children may benefit from rules like only parents touch (put on, take-off) the patch. Patching a teddy or dolly can help.



- It is a good idea to explain the patching to people the child is coming into contact with so they will know not to tease.
- Patching can be done either at home, nursery or school. Supervision and distraction from the patch can be greater at nursery or school, so it may be better to patch during these hours.
- It is important for your child to actively carry out visual tasks when wearing the patch.
- Try to be creative. Drawing pictures or putting stickers on the patch chart or even creating patch games (e.g. pirates) can help.
- Your child may find it quite hard to do things while wearing the patch at first. It is important to be ready to deal with your child's frustration and to have activities ready to do that can help distract your child.

Suggested activities

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| Colouring | Jigsaws |
| Drawing | Play board games |
| Play with lego | Read |
| Look at picture book | Find letters or colour in letters in a newspaper |
| Knitting | Cross-stitch |
| Painting | Sewing |
| Do homework | Do arts and crafts |
| String beads | Make Hama Beads |
| Do puzzles like wordsearches and mazes | |
| Play hand-held computer games like DS, PSP and Gameboy | |
| Play computer games on a PC or laptop | |

Puzzle/Games Websites

- Cbeebies www.bbc.co.uk/cbeebies/
 NickJr www.nickjr.co.uk/
 Playhouse Disney games www.disney.co.uk/playhouse-disney/
 PacXon (arcade and classic games) www.addictinggames.com/pacxon.html
 Eye can learn (eye exercises and puzzles to improve learning and visual attention) www.eyecanlearn.com/
 Lumosity (improve memory and attention with scientific brain games) www.lumosity.com/
 Happy puzzle company (to purchase board games and puzzles) www.happypuzzle.co.uk/

The Trust endeavours to ensure that the information given here is accurate and impartial.

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