

Amblyopia

What is lazy eye?

LAZY EYE, OR AMBLYOPIA, IS LOSS OF VISION IN EYES THAT IS NOT CORRECTED BY GLASSES. IT IS A CONDITION THAT STARTS IN CHILDHOOD. MORE THAN ONE IN 50 CHILDREN HAVE AMBLYOPIA. IF NOT TREATED, IT CAN CAUSE LIFELONG VISION LOSS IN THE PROBLEM EYE. AMBLYOPIA HAS ANY CAUSES. MOST OFTEN, IT RESULTS WHEN A CHILD HAS CROSSED EYES OR EYES THAT DON'T LINE UP. ONE EYE THAT FOCUSES BETTER THAN THE OTHER CAN ALSO CAUSE AMBLYOPIA. ONE IN 20 PRESCHOOL CHILDREN HAS AN EYE PROBLEM THAT COULD CAUSE AMBLYOPIA. IN BOTH CASES, ONE EYE BECOMES STRONGER. THE STRONG EYE TAKES ON MORE OF THE JOB OF SEEING WHILE THE WEAK EYE IS USED LESS. IF THE PROBLEM IS NOT TREATED, THE WEAK EYE WILL BE ABLE TO SEE LESS AND LESS, AND VISION GETS WORSE. FINDING AND TREATING THE PROBLEM EARLY CAN RESTORE SIGHT IN THE LAZY EYE.

YOU CAN PROTECT YOUR CHILD FROM VISION LOSS CAUSED BY AMBLYOPIA IF YOU:

1. Look for signs of lazy eye
2. Have your child's vision checked one eye at a time

What are the signs of lazy eye?

Many different problems can cause lazy eye. Here are some signs of eye trouble that could be related to lazy eye or other eye problems:

- > Favoring one eye
- > Tilting the head
- > An eye drifts or wanders when the child is tired, sick or in bright light
- > Your child tends to close one eye, especially in sunlight
- > Rubbing the eyes
- > Your child seems to blink too much
- > Your child holds things close to his or her eyes

If you notice these or other signs of eye trouble,

take your child to an eye doctor right away. Some children with eye problems may show no signs of eye trouble.

Have your child's eyes checked

Remember, treatment works best when lazy eye is found early. A child's eyes should be checked:

- > Shortly after birth
- > Before starting school (age 3 or 4)
- > Throughout the school years as needed

Regular eye care is important even when your child shows no signs of eye trouble.

For a free copy of Prevent Blindness America's Children's Eye Health Position Statement, call 1-800-331-2020 or visit www.preventblindness.org.

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO TREAT LAZY EYE?

Unless it is treated, an unused "lazy eye" will lose vision. This may lead to lifelong blindness in the weak eye. If amblyopia is treated before the child is 3 years old, chances of restoring sight are very good.

By the age of 6 or 7, your child's vision will be fully developed. After that, amblyopia becomes harder to treat.

How does an eye doctor treat lazy eye?

First, a doctor must treat the cause of amblyopia. Here are some common treatments:

- > Glasses can correct focus or help eyes that are not lined up.
- > Surgery on eye muscles can help straighten the eyes if other treatments don't work.

Surgery can help both eyes work together.

> Eye exercises may help the weak eye see better.

Along with treating the cause, the doctor must help the weak eye grow strong again. There are several ways to do this:

> Patching or covering the strong eye makes the “lazy” eye work harder.

Your child may need to wear an eye patch for a few weeks or many months. Your child will have to visit the eye doctor regularly to see if the weaker eye is getting stronger. Patching works best in early childhood, but a doctor may recommend patching at any time.

> Medicine such as eye drops or ointment can be used instead of patching in some cases to blur the vision in the stronger eye.

> Glasses or contact lenses can also be used to blur vision in the strong eye, helping the weak eye work harder.

Support your child’s treatment

If you have a child with amblyopia, he or she may be frustrated with treatment such as patching. Understand the problem, and be patient. This will help make treatment a success.

YOU’RE NOT IN THIS ALONE!

As a parent, you may feel overwhelmed at times by your child’s amblyopia treatment. You may be experiencing anxiety, fear or even feelings of guilt. You should know that tens of thousands of parents around the country are going through the same thing right now. Many of them log on to Prevent Blindness America’s online forum to discuss these feelings, their

child's treatment and strategies for success.
You can join this free parent-led support
resource at www.preventblindness.net/forum.

WE CAN HELP YOU LEARN MORE ABOUT PROTECTING YOUR CHILD'S SIGHT.

If you have questions about glaucoma or
would like to know more, call Prevent
Blindness America at 1-800-331-2020 or visit
our website, www.preventblindness.org.

Prevent Blindness America

National Office:
211 West Wacker Drive
Suite 1700
Chicago, Illinois 60606

Additional copies available for purchase.
The information in this brochure is subject to change.
Please call 1-800-331-2020 for more information.
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Our One Purpose: Saving Sight

Founded in 1908, Prevent Blindness America
is the nation's leading volunteer eye health
and safety organization dedicated to fighting
blindness and saving sight. Focused on
promoting a continuum of vision care, Prevent
Blindness America touches the lives of millions
of people each year through public and
professional education, advocacy, certified
vision screening training, community and

patient service programs and research.

These services are made possible through the generous support of the American public.

Together with a network of affiliates, divisions and chapters, it is committed to eliminating preventable blindness in America.

For more information, or to make a contribution to the sight-saving fund, call 1-800-331-2020 or visit us on the Web at www.preventblindness.org.