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Amblyopia

Amblyopia is the loss of the ability to see clearly through one eye. It is also called "lazy eye." It is the most common cause of vision problems in children.

Causes

Amblyopia occurs when the nerve pathway from one eye to the brain does not develop during childhood. This problem develops because the abnormal eye sends a blurred image or the wrong image to the brain.

This confuses the brain, and the brain may learn to ignore the image from the weaker eye.

[Strabismus](#) (crossed eyes) is the most common cause of amblyopia. There is often a family history of this condition.

The term "lazy eye" refers to amblyopia, which often occurs along with strabismus. However, amblyopia can occur without strabismus. Also, people can have strabismus without amblyopia.

Other causes include:

- Childhood [cataracts](#)
- [Farsightedness](#), [nearsightedness](#), or [astigmatism](#), especially if it is greater in one eye

Symptoms

Symptoms of the condition include:

- Eyes that turn in or out
- Eyes that do not appear to work together
- Inability to judge depth correctly
- Poor vision in one eye

Exams and Tests

In most cases, amblyopia can be detected with a complete eye exam. Special tests are not often needed.

Treatment

The first step will be to correct any eye condition that is causing poor vision in the amblyopic eye (such as cataracts).

Children with a refractive error (nearsightedness, farsightedness, or astigmatism) will need glasses.

Next, a patch is placed on the normal eye. This forces the brain to recognize the image from the eye with amblyopia. Sometimes, drops are used to blur the vision of the normal eye instead of putting a patch on it.

Children whose vision will not fully recover, and those with only one good eye due to any disorder should wear glasses. These glasses should be shatter- and scratch-resistant.

Outlook (Prognosis)

Children who get treated before age 5 almost always recover vision that is close to normal. However, they may continue to have problems with depth perception.

Permanent vision problems may result if treatment is delayed. Children treated after age 10 can expect vision to recover only partially.

Possible Complications

Complications may include:

- Eye muscle problems that may require several surgeries
- Permanent vision loss in the affected eye

When to Contact a Medical Professional

Call your health care provider or ophthalmologist if you suspect a vision problem in a young child.

Prevention

Identifying and treating the problem early prevents children from having permanent visual loss. All children should have a complete eye exam at least once between ages 3 and 5.

Special methods are used to measure vision in a child who is too young to speak. Most eye care professionals can perform these techniques.

Alternative Names

Lazy eye; Vision loss - amblyopia

Images



Visual acuity test



Walleyes

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Updated by: Franklin W. Lusby, MD, ophthalmologist, Lusby Vision Institute, La Jolla, CA. Also reviewed by David Zieve, MD, MHA, Isla Ogilvie, PhD, and the A.D.A.M. Editorial team.

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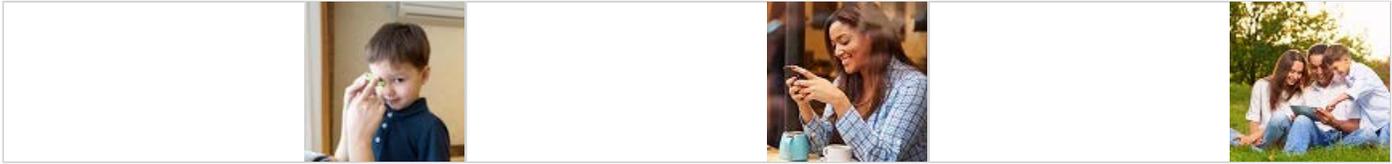
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