NHS

The Ipswich Hospital
NHS Trust

A Lazy Eye

Orthoptic Department
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What is a lazy eye?

A lazy eye, or amblyopia, occurs when the sight of one or both eyes is under-developed causing reduced vision.

What causes amblyopia?

A squint is the most common reason for one eye to become amblyopic, but it can also occur when one eye is more long or short sighted than the other.

How do we treat amblyopia?

Amblyopia can be treated with glasses and/or by wearing a patch. Glasses help by letting the eye focus properly but a patch may also be needed.

How does wearing a patch help my child's sight?

Your child's sight will improve if he or she uses the amblyopic eye more, since it is lack of proper use that has caused it to be lazy. By covering the good eye we force the lazy eye to work harder. If your child needs glasses then these should be used at the same time as wearing the patch.

Does patching really work?

This treatment will only work if your child wears the patch as instructed. If started at an early age, wearing a patch is usually successful. The patch will only help the sight in your child's lazy eye and will not improve the squint. Squints are treated with glasses and/or surgery.

Is there any treatment other than wearing a patch?

There are alternative treatments to improve vision in a lazy eye. Your orthoptist (a specialist in the treatment of squints and children's eye development) will discuss the most appropriate treatment for your child.

What should my child do when wearing the patch?

Some effective activities you can do with your child while wearing the patch include:

- reading;
- drawing, painting or colouring;
- playing with small toys to encourage the eye to work harder;
- playing 'finding games' such as picking out small foods from a plate (raisins, Smarties, nuts, cubed fruit/veg etc) or play at www.kayfunpatch.com/fun-picture-search/;
- LEGO play/building;
- Play-Doh or clay play;
- mazes or jigsaws;
- computer/tablet games or DVDs; and
- decorating their patch.

If your child's sight is very poor, it is best that they play with things that are big and bright so that they can be seen more easily. Also they may need to sit closer to the TV to see properly while wearing the patch.

How long will my child need to wear a patch?

This varies from child to child and depends on their age and how long the eye has been lazy. Your orthoptist will see you regularly to monitor progress and will develop a treatment plan to suit you and the visual needs of your child.

Will it get better on its own?

No. If left untreated the child may have permanently damaged sight which cannot be corrected when they are older.

Where can I get more patches?

If you telephone the department with details of the size and type of patch your child wears, we will be happy to post more out to you.

How can I find out more about wearing a patch?

Ask any of the eye care professionals involved with your child's treatment and they will be able to answer any specific questions you may have.

Some useful tips

- Use 'the 4 Rs' – Reassure, Reinforce, Routine, and Reward.
- Persevere.
- Enlist support from others (for example family or school, making teachers and other students aware).
- Patch a teddy / toy to encourage your child.
- Experiment – find a routine that suits you and your child best.
- Keep them busy.
- Make it fun!

Further information:

- www.nhs.uk/conditions/Lazy-eye/
- www.preventblindness.org/make-patch-time-count
- www.forlittleeyes.com/2009/01/08/activities-to-do-with-your-toddler-when-patching-or-wearing-glasses/
- www.patchpals.com/activities
- www.wonderbaby.org/articles/patching-resources
- www.kayfunpatch.com/