

Short guides



BIOS

British and Irish
Orthoptic Society

Amblyopia

A short guide for patients and carers



This leaflet answers common questions about Amblyopia, what it is and how it is treated.

What is amblyopia?

Amblyopia occurs when the sight of one or both eyes is under developed, causing reduced vision.

What causes amblyopia?

Strabismus, often referred to as a squint, is the most common reason for one eye to be amblyopic but it can also occur when vision has been blocked, or because one eye is more long or short sighted than the other.



How do we treat Amblyopia?

Amblyopia may first be treated with glasses if they are needed. Glasses help by letting the eye focus properly. If vision remains reduced, this means there is a problem with visual development and patching or using blurring eye drops may also be needed.





How does treatment help my child's sight?

The sight will improve if the child uses the eye more. By patching or blurring the good eye, it forces the other to work harder. If the child needs glasses then these should be used at the same time as patching.

What should my child do when wearing the patch or having the eye drop?

It's good to keep your child busy and distracted when they are wearing their patch - activities such as reading or drawing may be helpful. Remember that their vision is reduced so they may need extra help.



How much treatment will my child need?

This varies from child to child and depends on their age and how reduced the vision is. The orthoptist will see you regularly to monitor progress and will develop a treatment plan to suit you and the visual needs of your child.

Does treatment really work?

Treatment will only work if your child wears the patch or uses the eye drops as instructed. If started at an early age, treatment is usually successful. Amblyopia treatment will only help your child's vision and will not improve strabismus.



Will it get better on its own?

No. If left untreated the child may have permanently damaged sight which cannot be corrected when he or she is older.

Is atropine a good alternative treatment to patching for amblyopia?

Yes, when used effectively atropine and patching are equally effective treatment options for amblyopia. Speak to an eyecare professional to see if this is suitable for your child.



Are there any other treatments?

All treatment for amblyopia involves covering or blurring the good eye to force the other to work harder. There are no operations to cure amblyopia. Simply using the eye makes the sight improve.

How can I find out more about patching and eye drops?

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.

For more information on amblyopia and supporting children with patching or eye drops, visit the British and Irish Orthoptic Society website.

