

Devon in Sight Eye Condition Fact Sheet 17

Lazy Eye or Amblyopia

Introduction

Lazy eye or amblyopia may be caused if a young child needs very strong glasses, has one eye that is significantly more **short-sighted** or **long-sighted** than the other, or has a **squint** (where the eyes are not looking in the same direction). This means that the sight in the affected eye or eyes does not develop properly.

Who is affected by amblyopia (lazy eye)?

About 2%-3% of all children develop lazy eye, clinically known as amblyopia, when they are a few years old. Children with learning difficulties are ten times more likely to have problems with their vision, including amblyopia

What are the symptoms of amblyopia (lazy eye)?

Lazy eye is not always easy for parents to spot, and children assume that the way they see is normal and so will not tell you that there is a problem. Symptoms include:

- one eye turning in or out. This may be more noticeable if the child is tired or unwell
- being clumsy or having poor hand to eye coordination
- screwing up their eyes or shutting an eye
- complaining about double vision, or having unexplained headaches.

The NHS recommends that all children should have vision screening during their first year at school. This is done in school, usually by a school nurse, and should pick up vision problems including amblyopia. If your child misses the school screening, you should take them to your local optometrist for a sight test. This will be paid for by the NHS.

How do you treat amblyopia (lazy eye)?

It is more difficult to treat lazy eye once the eyesight has finished developing (usually around the age of seven), but it may still be possible to significantly improve the vision in the weaker eye. The aim of treatment is to stimulate the vision to develop in the lazy eye by enabling the child to use the eye more. The treatment depends on what is causing the lazy eye:

- **wearing glasses** - if the cause of the amblyopia is fully corrected by glasses, the vision in the amblyopic eye may improve over time simply by the child wearing glasses, and no further treatment is needed
- **patching** - covering your child's good eye can encourage them to use the lazy eye, and so improve vision in that eye
- **eye drops** - these are put into the good eye to blur the vision in that eye. They act like patching.
- **surgery** - if glasses do not fully correct a child's squint, the child may need an operation to straighten their eyes to help them use both together. This can be done as early as a few months of age.

Lazy Eye or Amblyopia information advice, and support

College of Optometrists

"Through my eyes video" shows what your vision can be like with Lazy Eye.

Website: <https://lookafteryoureyes.org/eye-conditions/lazy-eye/>

British and Irish Orthoptic Society

Website: <https://www.orthoptics.org.uk/patients-and-public/about-orthoptics/#Amblyopia2>

What to do next?

If you are experiencing any of the above symptoms or your sight loss deteriorates, please contact your GP/Optician/Accident & Emergency Department at your local Hospital.

If you need any further advice call our Helpline: 01392 876 666

Devon in Sight is a member of the Helpline Partnership Community.

Credit

We would like to thank the **Royal College of Optometrists** for their kind permission to reproduce this information.

Further Support Available from Devon in Sight

- **Information, Advice and Guidance**
 - **Demonstrations of Low Vision Aids & Daily Living Equipment**
 - **Assistive Technology Solutions**
 - **Our holistic needs assessment (Sight Loss MOT)**
 - **Training for people with central vision loss (Skills for Seeing)**
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Devon in Sight is not a medical organisation; therefore we can only provide general information that is not intended to be a substitute for a proper medical assessment. Our information is not intended to be used for individual cases. If you have a specific question about your eye condition, we recommend that you consult an eye care professional.

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Our Information, Advice & Guidance Resources were correct at the time of writing. However, due to research and medical advances, the content may not be completely up to date.

Devon in Sight Contact Information



Helpline 01392 876 666
www.devoninsight.org.uk
enquiries@devoninsight.org.uk

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