

Amblyopia - Eye Patching

The Following Information has been Prepared for You:

Patching is a type of vision therapy that helps children with amblyopia (lazy eye) make a full recovery. The earlier amblyopia is detected and treatment is initiated, the quicker and easier it is to treat. If amblyopia is not detected during a child's critical early development years, permanent loss of vision and depth perception occurs and vision cannot be restored with glasses, contact lenses, or surgery.

Amblyopia typically occurs during early childhood, when one eye sees significantly better than the other eye. To avoid visual confusion, the brain starts to ignore, or suppress, the poorer-seeing eye, and use the better-seeing eye exclusively. As amblyopia develops, the communication between the brain and eye further deteriorates and the visual system fails to develop properly. Treatment with patching reverses this process. The poorer seeing eye is forced to be used exclusively and the brain has no choice but to recognize it. With continued visual stimulus, the communication pathway is restored and amblyopia is reversed.

During the course of patch therapy, your child may be given eyeglasses to correct myopia, hyperopia, or astigmatism. Bifocal lenses or prism may be prescribed, depending on the type of amblyopia and the child's current vision needs. Any prescribed glasses are to be worn full-time. The patch will be used simultaneously with the glasses to allow the poorer-seeing eye to be utilized to its fullest potential. Your Optometrist will regularly evaluate your child's eye health and vision. A measurement called "visual acuity" will be taken at each visit. Stereopsis (depth perception) will be checked. Glasses prescriptions may be adjusted, patching times may be changed, and additional vision therapy techniques and exercises may be used, depending on your child's response to patching. Once the vision is restored to sharp 20/20 acuity, the patching will be reduced or discontinued. Your Optometrist will recommend regular vision evaluations through adolescence to ensure the amblyopia does not return and require further treatment.

Parents need to discuss the condition and treatment with teachers, since amblyopia may affect school performance and patching may be required during school hours. While the patch is being used, it is important to observe the child to make sure the child is not removing or readjusting the patch so it does not fully cover the eye. This would hinder vision therapy results. Noncompliance with patching may be managed in the follow ways: use of an adhesive patch that makes it difficult for the child to remove it, glasses with a lens on the good-seeing eye intentionally blurred so that the poorer-seeing eye becomes the better-seeing eye, eyedrops given a few days a week to purposefully dilate and blur the vision in the better-seeing eye, or arm braces that prevent the child from bending at the elbow and reaching up to remove the patch. Talk to your doctor if you are having trouble with patch compliance and need to consider other options.

There are many resources to help you explain and encourage patching with your child. You can find books, Youtube videos, online "eyepatch clubs," calendars and rewards programs to track and encourage success. There are a variety of patch colors and patterns that appeal to children. Throwing a pirate party where everyone else wears a patch is helpful. You may play computer games or make up activities that all participants do while wearing a patch. Speak with all family members in advance and explain the purpose and need for patching, to avoid unwelcome comments that could cause your child to feel self-conscious. Choose outfits and accessories to match the patch, or find patches with fun holiday themes. Have a patch-decorating event. Complement the way the patch looks with their clothes or hairstyle. Your child needs to understand that patching is not a forever solution. It is temporary, like braces. Overall, the better attitude you have about patching, the better attitude your child will have, and the better the chance for success!

There are a few potential side effects to patching that require awareness and caution. While the patch is on the eye, decreased depth perception and temporary loss of side vision will occur on the side of the body corresponding with the patched eye. The patch should not be worn when going up and down stairs, climbing ladders, walking in poorly lit areas, or during sports. Fine detailed vision of the unpatched eye will be blurry at first, so some activities such as reading, computer, and classroom work may be very uncomfortable or impossible. The child may need to start wearing the patch with other activities and gradually build up to wearing it for fine detailed activities as better vision develops. Adhesive patches may cause an allergic reaction or skin irritation. Cloth patches may cause allergic reactions from detergents. Patching an eye for too many hours a day could cause amblyopia to

develop in the good eye, so it is important to follow the directions given by your Optometrist and return as directed for regular vision evaluations during the course of therapy.

Your doctor may recommend some of the treatments listed below. Please follow the recommendations that were discussed during your exam.

___ Glasses wear full-time

___ Wear a patch over the stronger eye from 2-4 hours per day, 7 days a week. Patching hours do not need to be consecutive, but your child must be awake and alert during use. The patch should be worn securely under any prescribed glasses, and extend from the bridge of the nose to the temple, in order to completely occlude the eye. Various patch options are available for purchase in our optical shop.

___ While wearing the patch, your child should do concentrated visual activities such as reading, computer, crossword puzzles, eye-spy books, small-detailed crafts, painting, or coloring.

___ Return for a re-evaluation in regular intervals, usually 3-6 months.

Please Rate the Information You Received

	☐ Very helpful - all questions are answered ☐ Somewhat helpful - I still have questions ☐ Not helpful – none of my questions were answered
Comments / Questions / Typos:	

Provider Contact Information

Family Eye Care & Pediatric Vision Center, PLLC
Melissa Holliman, OD
David Holliman, OD
Brandon Holliman, OD

1203 N. Eastman Rd
Kingsport, TN 37664
Phone: (423) 274-3321
Fax: (423) 247-3631
FamilyEyecareKingsport@gmail.com
Website: DrHolliman.com