

Amblyopia

The Following Information has been Prepared for You:

Amblyopia is a developmental delay in vision that occurs after birth. Anything that may cause the eyes to be out of focus can cause amblyopia: large or unequal amounts of hyperopia, myopia, or astigmatism, congenital cataracts, strabismus and scar-forming injury or infection to the cornea (the normally clear dome on the front of the eye).

The term "amblyopia" is sometimes used incorrectly to describe damage to the optic nerve by poor nutrition, high volume blood loss, prolonged oxygen deprivation, exposure to toxic fumes, drugs or alcohol. A more accurate term for them is "optic neuropathy." Various neuropathies occur most commonly in adulthood and may not be treatable.

Children do not know when they have amblyopia. They may not show any signs of vision problems, since when both eyes are open, usually one is compensating enough for the other to hide the underlying problem of the amblyopic eye. School and pediatrician vision screenings may detect it. However, screenings often miss amblyopia and other eye or vision conditions. Signs and symptoms, when they are apparent, are similar to those of strabismus. Decreased depth-perception, delayed or slow reading skills, difficulty staying focused on concentrated tasks, headache, and eyestrain may sometimes be noticed by parents, coaches or teachers.

Treatment usually involves bringing the eyes into focus with glasses or contact lenses. Sometimes, the difference in the prescription between each eye may make it very difficult or impossible to address with glasses, and contact lenses offer a better solution. For congenital cataracts or cataracts that form due to eye injury during childhood, surgery to remove the opaque lens is typically performed. For corneal scars, laser surgery or corneal grafts or transplants can restore light passage through the eye. After removing the offending blockage, the eye may be encouraged to develop proper vision by patching the other eye for 2 or more hours a day. Exclusive utilization of the weak eye during this time helps to encourage proper development of the visual system. Additional vision therapy techniques can be used to improve vision.

Amblyopia treatment requires intervention during early childhood, when the visual system is actively developing due to environmental feedback. If treatment does not begin early enough, or is not continually monitored during its course, permanent vision loss that lasts for a lifetime occurs.

Often, amblyopia and strabismus occur simultaneously. Both are usually treatable if detected early. We recommend that all children receive their first comprehensive eye exam before their first birthday, and at least every two years afterward. If Strabismus or Amblyopia runs in the family, it is especially recommended that all siblings and cousins have annual evaluations to watch their developing eyes.

Contact our office with any significant vision changes or emergencies that you feel require immediate attention.

Typical treatment for these conditions consists of any combination of the following. Please follow your doctor recommendations at the time of your exam.

- ☐ Full time wear of glasses
- ☐ Special glasses with prism, bifocal lenses, or both
- ☐ Contact lenses
- ☐ Patching of the stronger eye for 2-4 hours per day

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:	

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