

Amblyopia

Amblyopia is also known as lazy eye and is a condition in which an eye that is physically normal has poor vision. It is usually caused by either no or poor transmission of visual images to the brain during early childhood.

How does it affect vision?

Because one eye is able to see better than the other the brain begins to ignore the visual impulses from the weaker eye and if the condition is not treated the weaker eye becomes useless.

Who is most at risk?

Amblyopia is caused by other eye conditions such as misaligned eyes (e.g. crossed eyes), or a difference in the quality of vision in the two eyes (e.g. one eye focuses better than the other) which may be caused by conditions such as cataracts. Usually only one eye is effected.

How can it be treated?

Amblyopia can be treated using a variety of methods. Often it is necessary to treat the underlying cause first.

It is common for glasses to be prescribed in order to improve the focus or misalignment of the eyes.

If non-surgical treatments do not work it may be necessary for surgery to be performed on the muscles of the eye to straighten the eyes.

Eye exercises may also be prescribed to teach comfortable use of the eyes and help correct any incorrect visual habits associated with strabismus.

After the underlying cause of amblyopia has been addressed eye patching is usually used over the stronger eye to force the weaker eye to work and therefore strengthen its vision

How does it progress with age?

If amblyopia is left untreated it may result in good vision never being developed in the weaker eye leading to it becoming functionally blind (i.e. messages from the weak eye are ignored by the brain).

Adapted from Amblyopia (Lazy Eye) by Prevent Blindness America.



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