

What is Amblyopia or “Lazy Eye”



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Amblyopia or “lazy eye” is when one eye has less vision than the other eye. Lazy eye occurs when one eye is not used often during early childhood.

It is also called “lazy eye” because one eye becomes stronger and does more of the work. The other eye becomes weaker or “lazy” and may become useless over time.

What Causes Lazy Eye?

There are different causes of lazy eye:

1. Crossing of the eyes
2. Different vision or prescription in each eye
3. Blockage of an eye such as a cataract

How Do You Know You Have It?

Symptoms are not always obvious. If you see your child using one eye more than the other (such as closing or shutting the weaker eye), or if your child bumps into objects on one side, he or she may have lazy eye.

It is important that your child sees a doctor if you think he or she has lazy eye. Early detection and treatment can prevent the loss of vision in the lazy eye.

Is There Treatment?

If detected and treated early, vision in the lazy eye can be restored.

There are different types of treatment depending on the cause of lazy eye:

- If lazy eye is due to eye crossing, surgery may be done on the eye muscles to straighten the eye. Eye exercises may be suggested by your doctor before or after the surgery to help repair the eyes and to let them to work together.

Sometimes an eye patch is put over the stronger eye to let the weaker eye work more.

- If lazy eye is due to different vision or prescription in each eye, then glasses are prescribed.
- If lazy eye is caused by an eye blockage such as a cataract, then surgery may be needed.

Common Questions

- *If my child wears glasses, will he or she become dependent on them, or will his or her vision get worse?*

No. It is important that your child gets the sharpest and clearest vision possible to allow his or her eyes to develop fully. Your child’s vision will not get worse from wearing glasses.

- *Is lazy eye caused by watching too much television, playing video games, reading in the dark, etc.?*

No, none of these activities cause lazy eye.

- *When should my child be checked for lazy eye?*

If lazy eye is not treated early, the weaker eye may never develop good vision and may even become blind so early detection is important. Children should have an eye exam by the age of 6 months and at age 3. A lazy eye will not go away on its own.