

### **AMBLYOPIA (Lazy Eye)**

Amblyopia, also known as lazy eye, is a vision problem that affects just two to three percent of the population, but if left uncorrected, it can have a very big impact on their lives. **Central vision does not develop properly, usually in one eye**, which is called amblyopic. A related condition, **strabismus** (one eye turns in or out), sometimes causes amblyopia.

Untreated amblyopia may lead to functional blindness in the affected eye. Although the amblyopic eye has the capability to see, the brain "turns off" this eye because vision is very blurred. **The brain prefers to see only with the stronger eye.**

Amblyopia generally develops in young children, **before age six**. Its symptoms may be noted by parents, caregivers or health-care professionals. If a child squints or completely closes one eye to see, he or she may have amblyopia. Other signs include overall poor visual acuity, eyestrain and headaches. **Many children have no obvious signs.**

**What Causes Amblyopia?** Trauma to the eye at any age can cause amblyopia, as well as a strong uncorrected refractive error (shortsightedness or longsightedness) or strabismus. **It's important to correct amblyopia as early as possible, before the brain learns to entirely ignore vision in the affected eye.**

**TREATMENT:** Amblyopic children can be treated with patching of one eye, atropine eye drops, the correct prescription for shortsightedness or longsightedness, or surgery. The treatment aims to force the brain to see through the amblyopic (lazy) eye, thus restoring vision.

**1. GLASSES:** may or may not be necessary.

**2. A PATCH** over the stronger eye forces the weaker eye to learn to see. Patching may be required for several hours each day or even all day long, and may continue for weeks or months.

**3. ATROPINE eye drops** have been used to treat amblyopia instead of patching. One drop is placed in the child's **good eye** each day (the parent can do this). Atropine blurs vision in the good eye, which **forces the child to use the LAZY eye more**, to strengthen it. One advantage is that it doesn't require constant vigilance on the part of the parent to make sure the child wears the patch.

**4. Strabismus:** If there is a turn in one eye, this may be corrected with glasses or surgery depending on individual circumstances.