

Information for parents

Patching for amblyopia (lazy eye)

Amblyopia - pronounced amb-lee-oh-pee-ah (lazy eye) is a childhood condition where the vision in one eye doesn't develop properly. This usually means that your child can see less clearly out of the affected eye and relies more on their "good" eye. The condition can occur in children from birth, until around the age of seven.

What causes lazy eye?

Amblyopia can be caused by:

- One eye facing in a different direction (strabismus or squint)
- A difference in the glasses prescription between the two eyes.
- Something blocking the visual stimulation to the eye, such as a droopy eyelid or cataract (cloudy lens); the amblyopia may carry on after the blockage has been removed.

Treatment for lazy eye

Glasses can help and should be worn full-time if prescribed. If glasses alone do not correct the sight in both eyes, further treatment will be required, usually in addition to wearing glasses.

There are two treatment options and both work by temporarily reducing the use of the good eye, therefore stimulating the vision in the weaker eye:

1. A patch to cover the good eye. If glasses are worn, the patch should usually be worn under the glasses stuck to the skin.
2. Eye drops (atropine) to blur the vision in the good eye. The drops should be used twice a week.

The doctor and orthoptist will discuss the best option for your child with you.

Patching

The sticky patches are usually worn on the face under the glasses. Once your child's eyesight starts to improve you may be advised to use a cloth patch on their glasses instead, but be aware that children can peep around those.

Treatment is often effective, but it's a gradual process that takes many months to work. The amount of time your child will need to wear the patch will depend on how old they are, their response to treatment and how much they co-operate with the patch.



Your child will need regular appointments so that we can monitor their vision and adapt the treatment depending on their progress.

Top tips for patching

Using a patch can sometimes be unpleasant for a child and they might need some encouragement to co-operate. It's important to explain the reasons for using a patch, and the importance of sticking with the treatment to your child so that they're motivated to do it.

Choosing the right time to patch is important. Getting your child into a routine usually helps. Try not to patch when your child is tired and try distracting them from the patching through play or fun activities. For example, whilst watching a cartoon on television or a tablet computer.

For older children, patching is much more effective when combined with close-up activities such as colouring, reading or schoolwork.

Teachers at school or nursery can sometimes take on some of the patching. Grandparents can also be very useful supervising the patching.

Make sure you wash the area around your child's eye before you put on the patch as they stick better to grease free skin.

If your child pulls the patch off easily, you could use some extra sticky tape to stick the patch to the skin or try to distract them with play.

Difficulties with patching

When the patch is first applied your child may have trouble getting around or finding objects. This is because their good eye will be covered and they are having to use their weaker eye. This should only last for a few weeks whilst your child gets used to wearing a patch and will get easier as their vision improves.

You might notice that your child seems clumsier than usual during the first few weeks of patching, so take extra care when looking after them.

Using a patch to treat a lazy eye can take time and can sometimes be difficult for children. However, poor success of the treatment is most often down to children not wearing their patch enough, so it's important to remember to encourage your child to co-operate with the treatment and for you to stay positive about it. It's important to treat amblyopia as early as possible for the treatment to be most effective. If left untreated, the vision in the lazy eye will be permanently damaged.

In some cases, children with sensitive skin may develop a rash from the patch. If this occurs, contact your local orthoptic team and they will be able to advise you on what to do.



What happens next?

Your child will have regular appointments whilst being treated. As vision improves, the use of patches may be changed or replaced with eye drops under the instruction of the orthoptist.

Please try to follow the instructions given by your child's doctor or orthoptist.

We know that children do not always understand why they need the patch and treatment can be difficult. Your orthoptist is very experienced in dealing with children who have amblyopia and can advise you about carrying out the treatment at home as effectively as possible.

Contacting us

If you need to contact the orthoptist or need more patches, please contact the Moorfields' service where your child is being seen:

Moorfields Eye Hospital, City Road

Phone: 020 7566 2161 (Monday to Friday)

Moorfields at St George's

Phone: 020 8266 6120 (Monday to Friday)

Moorfields at Ealing

Phone: 020 8967 5766 (Tuesday and Wednesday, ask for the orthoptist)

Moorfields at Northwick Park

Phone: 020 3182 4000 (Wednesday and Friday, ask for the orthoptist)

Moorfields at Homerton

Phone: 020 8510 5018 (Friday, ask for the orthoptist)

Moorfields at Potters Bar

Phone: 01707 653 286 (Wednesday)

Moorfields at Bedford

Phone: 01234 792 290 (Monday to Friday)

Moorfields at Croydon

Phone: 020 8401 3485 (Monday to Friday)

Moorfields at Darent Valley Hospital

Phone: 01322 428 100 ext. 4646 (Monday, ask for the orthoptist)

More information about patching is available online:

www.orthoptics.org.uk

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Moorfields Eye Hospital NHS

Foundation Trust

City Road, London EC1V 2PD

Phone: 020 7253 3411

www.moorfields.nhs.uk

Moorfields Direct telephone helpline

Phone: 020 7566 2345

Monday-Friday, 8.30am-9pm

Saturday, 9am-5pm

Information and advice on eye conditions and treatments from experienced ophthalmic-trained nurses.

Patient advice and liaison service (PALS)

Moorfields Eye Hospital NHS Foundation Trust

City Road, London EC1V 2PD

Phone: 020 7253 3411

www.moorfields.nhs.uk





Phone: 020 7566 2324/ 020 7566 2325
Email: moorfields.pals@nhs.net
Moorfields' PALS team provides confidential advice and support to help you with any concerns you may have about the care we provide, guiding you through the different services available at Moorfields. The PALS team can also advise you on how to make a complaint.

Your right to treatment within 18 weeks

Under the NHS constitution, all patients have the right to begin consultant-led treatment within 18 weeks of being referred by their GP. Moorfields is committed to fulfilling this right, but if you feel that we have failed to do so, please contact our patient advice and liaison service (PALS) who will be able to advise you further (see above). For more information about your rights under the NHS constitution, visit www.nhs.uk/choiceinthenhs

