

# Double vision

## Information for patients

**Maidstone, Medway and Tunbridge Wells**

**Orthoptic Clinics: ☎ 01622 226236**

### What is double vision?

Double vision is when you see two of everything. The images may be side to side, one above the other, tilted, or a combination of these. It can occur in just one eye (monocular) or both eyes (binocular).

You have been given this leaflet if you have binocular double vision, and you will need to see an Orthoptist (eye muscle specialist) for investigations and treatment.

### Why have I got binocular double vision?

When one or more of your six eye muscles stops working, your eyes no longer work together as a pair. Your eyes begin to work independently and you see double.

Your eye muscles may become suddenly weak due to problems with your general health.

The eye specialists and your own family doctor may want to do some blood tests and scans to find the cause of your double vision.

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## How will having double vision affect me?

Double vision is very disorientating and can make you feel very unwell. You may feel you need to have someone with you when you are walking, as you will have problems judging distances, which can be quite frightening.

Some people find it impossible to read and perform normal everyday tasks with double vision.

## How can double vision be treated?

Treatment for double vision depends on what is causing it in the first place.

Sometimes double vision can be relieved by eye exercises to strengthen the weak eye muscles. The muscles may have been weak for many years and changes in your lifestyle may have made it harder for you to control the weakness.

The two images can sometimes be joined together using a temporary stick-on prism. The prism is stuck on to your glasses lens which may blur your vision slightly. If the prism is helpful and your double vision does not recover naturally, then the prism can be made as a permanent part of your glasses lens.

Sometimes the prism can be used to separate your two images, making them further apart and easier to ignore.

If it is not possible to fit a suitable prism on your glasses, or give you eye exercises, then the only other way of eliminating the double vision is to cover one eye. This can be done by using an eye patch or tape on your face or glasses.

## Can I drive?

No - if you suddenly have double vision, then you are not legally insured to drive. However, if any of the treatments described can be proved to stop you seeing double, then your motor insurance will be valid. Even then, some people do not feel confident enough to drive safely.

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Some people who have had double vision for a long time and who have adapted to living with it are allowed to drive. Please discuss this with your Orthoptist or Optometrist.

### **When will my eyes be better?**

It is important to remember that prisms, patches and tape remove the double vision and the symptoms associated with it, but do not make your eye muscles recover any quicker. Sometimes, the eye muscles can take several months to function normally again.

Once your eye condition is stable, if you are still experiencing double vision it may be appropriate to operate on your eye muscles to restore the balance between your eyes.

## Further information and advice can be obtained from:

The Health Professions Council [www.hpc-uk.org](http://www.hpc-uk.org)  
The British and Irish Orthoptic Society [www.orthoptics.org.uk](http://www.orthoptics.org.uk)

**NHS 111**  **111**  
**NHS Choices online** [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)

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**Telephone:**  01622 224960 or  01892 632953

**Email:** [mtw-tr.palsoffice@nhs.net](mailto:mtw-tr.palsoffice@nhs.net)

**or visit their office** at either Maidstone or Tunbridge Wells Hospital between 9.00am and 5.00pm, Monday to Friday.

You can be confident that your care will not be affected by highlighting any areas of concern or making a complaint. The Trust will retain a record of your contact, which is held separately to any medical records. If you are acting on behalf of a patient, we may need to obtain the patient's consent in order to protect patient confidentiality. More information on PALS or making a complaint can be found on the Trust's website: [www.mtw.nhs.uk](http://www.mtw.nhs.uk) or pick up a leaflet from main reception.

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