

# Eye patching treatment for amblyopia

**Information for parents/carers**  
**Maidstone, Medway and Tunbridge Wells**  
**Orthoptic Clinics: ☎ 01622 226236**

## What is the condition?

Amblyopia is a condition where the vision in one or both eyes does not fully develop even when glasses are worn. The child will have reduced vision so it is commonly called a 'lazy eye'.

## What causes amblyopia?

The treatment method can depend on the cause. The main causes of amblyopia are:

**Squint** – Is one of the most common causes of amblyopia. Vision is a learnt process and is dependent on the visual cortex in the brain receiving a clear image from each eye and both eyes working together. If your child has a squint, their eyes will not look in the same direction and they are likely to be using each eye separately. Due to this, one eye may be neglected, causing amblyopia.

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Anisometropia –the focusing power is different in each eye. This can cause difference in sight and so the brain will prefer to use the ‘clearer’ eye with a weaker glasses prescription. Due to this, the less clear eye may be neglected causing amblyopia.

Many parents believe that their child will outgrow amblyopia. Unfortunately, this is not true. If left untreated these problems can lead to permanent vision loss, so early diagnosis and treatment is necessary.

### **How can the condition be treated?**

The most commonly used treatment for amblyopia is occlusion therapy (covering the better eye with a patch). In some cases, atropine eye drops are applied to the better eye but this is less common.

This leaflet will give you details about treatment using an eye patch. If you would like more information about atropine occlusion please ask the Orthoptist about this.

### **Benefits of treatment**

This treatment is the only way to try and improve the vision in the ‘lazy eye’ and is most effective before the age of seven years, as this is when children’s vision stops developing. Treatment aims to develop the best vision possible, however in some cases it will not be possible to achieve equal vision at the end of the treatment. Any improvement in vision is significant and will benefit your child.

### **How does the patch work?**

The eye patch is put over the better eye to encourage use of the weaker eye and help to improve the vision. The better eye is usually completely covered with an eye patch. This is called total occlusion where no light is allowed to pass through the patch.

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### What are the risks of the treatment?

There are very few risks associated with patching treatment. There is a small risk that children wearing an eye patch can develop double vision. This is only if your child has a squint and is more common in older children (over seven years). **If your child develops double vision, you must stop the patching immediately and contact the Orthoptic Department.** The double vision usually stops without needing any further treatment.

### What patches will be used and where will I get them from?

There are a variety of patches that can be used. The most commonly used patches are adhesive and are used on the face covering the better eye. All patches are hypoallergenic but in a very small number of cases children develop an allergy to the patch. If this happens material patches can be attached to the child's glasses, if they are worn. There is a risk of peeping with this type of patching, where the child will look over the glasses and eye patch.

You should be given enough patches to last until your next visit but if you are running low, please contact the Orthoptic Department and more will be posted to you.

### How often will my child need to attend the Orthoptic Department?

Your child will need to be seen every one to three months to monitor the progress of the treatment.

The number of patching hours requested by an Orthoptist varies from patient to patient and depends on your child's level of vision.

The amount of time for patching and coming into the hospital for check-up's also varies from months to years depending on your child's vision and the cause of their amblyopia.

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## What should I do if my child can't attend an appointment?

It is very important to keep the follow up appointments. If you cannot attend you must contact the Orthoptic Department as soon as possible to change it. Please inform the reception staff about your child's treatment so they can re-book the appointment appropriately.

## Will patching improve my child's squint?

No - Some parents ask if the patching treatment improves the appearance of the squint. However, the patching itself is aiming only to improve the child's vision and does not change the position of their eye.

## What can I do to distract my child while wearing the patch?

There are various ways to distract your child while wearing the patch. Colouring, reading and computer games are very useful as they stimulate your child's vision while keeping them occupied. Below is a list of helpful resources:

### Websites:

- Mr. Nussbaum – Educational games, activities, and resources for children aged 5-14 years ([www.mrnussbaum.com](http://www.mrnussbaum.com))
- Adventure Academy for Kids 8-13 – Educational games and activities ([www.adventureacademy.com](http://www.adventureacademy.com))
- National Geographic – Educational games and videos ([www.kids.nationalgeographic.com](http://www.kids.nationalgeographic.com))
- Online reward chart for children ([www.kidrewards.org](http://www.kidrewards.org))

### Apps:

- Thinkrolls 2: Puzzles for Kids
  - Endless Alphabet
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## Books:

- The Pirate of Kindergarten (by George Ella Lyon)
- The Adventures of Patch Cat and Strabismouse (by J.Snow, C.O.)
- Apple Patty Patches (by Danielle D. Crull)
- My Travellin' Eye (by Jenny Sue Kostecki-Shaw)
- Patch Land Adventures (by Carmen Swick)
- Jacob's Eye Patch (by Beth Kobliner Shaw & Jacob Shaw)
- Matilda's Eye Patch (by Aimie Strachan)
- The Patch (by Justina Chen Headley)

Please note: We cannot be held responsible for the content of any websites you may explore but to the best of our knowledge these games/websites are suitable for young children.

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Please use this space for your notes

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## Further information and advice can be obtained from:

### **British and Irish Orthoptic Society (BIOS)**

BIOS is a professional and educational body for the UK and Republic of Ireland; it is a registered charity and a company limited by guarantee. [www.orthoptics.org.uk](http://www.orthoptics.org.uk)

### **NHS 111**

### **NHS Choices online**

 111

[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.

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