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from Judee,
Our Parish Nurse

Amblyopia (Lazy Eye)

What is amblyopia?

Amblyopia is reduced vision in an eye that has not received adequate use during early childhood.

What causes amblyopia?

Amblyopia, also known as "lazy eye," has many causes. Most often it results from either a misalignment of a child's eyes, such as crossed eyes, or a difference in image quality between the two eyes (one eye focusing better than the other.)

In both cases, one eye becomes stronger, suppressing the image of the other eye. If this condition persists, the weaker eye may become useless.

Can anything be done to treat amblyopia and prevent vision loss?

With early diagnosis and treatment, the sight in the "lazy eye" can be restored.

When should treatment for amblyopia begin?

The earlier the treatment, the better the opportunity to reverse the vision loss.

What treatments are available?

Before treating amblyopia, it may be necessary to first treat the underlying cause.

Glasses are commonly prescribed to improve focusing or misalignment of the eyes.

Surgery may be performed on the eye muscles to straighten the eyes if non-surgical means are unsuccessful. Surgery can help in the treatment of amblyopia by allowing the eyes to work together better.

Eye exercises may be recommended either before or after surgery to correct faulty visual habits associated with strabismus and to teach comfortable use of the eyes.

What treatment follows the correction of the underlying cause?

The correction may be followed by:

Patching or covering one eye may be required for a period of time ranging from a few weeks to as long as a year. The better-seeing eye is patched, forcing the "lazy" one to work, thereby strengthening its vision.

Medication—in the form of eye drops or ointment—may be used to blur the vision of the good eye in order to force the weaker one to work. This is generally a less successful approach.

What happens if amblyopia goes untreated?

If not treated early enough, an amblyopic eye may never develop good vision and may even become functionally blind.

How many people have amblyopia?

It is estimated that two to three percent of the general population suffers from this form of visual impairment.

Are there any support groups for parents and children who are dealing with amblyopia?

Prevent Blindness America offers a [web forum for amblyopia](#).

The [Eye Patch Club](#) is a valuable resource for children with amblyopia and their families.

For more information on your child's sight, email us at info@preventblindness.org, [contact us online](#), or call 1-800-331-2020.

Information provided in Prevent Blindness America is designed to support, not replace, the relationship that exists between a patient/site visitor and his or her doctor.

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