Amblyopia

Amblyopia, informally called “lazy eye,” is reduced vision in an eye due to abnormal visual development as a child.

**Amblyopia** is a condition in which an eye has reduced vision due to abnormal development of the visual pathways during childhood. When the brain receives poor information from one eye, it stops communicating with that eye. This means that the brain relies on information from the other, “stronger” eye. It is possible for amblyopia to occur in both eyes.

**Causes of Amblyopia**

Amblyopia can be present at birth, but children may also develop it as they grow. Amblyopia can be caused by other eye problems, such as refractive errors (nearsightedness, farsightedness), strabismus or squint (when the eyes do not move together as a pair), and cataracts. In some cases, the cause is a combination of these factors.

**Symptoms of Amblyopia**

Amblyopia most commonly occurs in children. It can be difficult for children to explain to their parents or doctors that they are having trouble seeing. They also may not notice limited vision in one eye because they use their stronger eye for most tasks. Parents may notice that their child is clumsy because of poor depth perception. They may also notice other habits like squinting, shutting one eye, or tilting the head to see well. In infants, parents may notice that their child cries when they cover one eye. This is because the child cannot see as well if the better-seeing eye is covered.

**Screening for Amblyopia**

A child’s pediatrician performs vision screenings at each well-child visit from birth to age 18 years. If the pediatrician, family members, or teachers have concerns about a child’s vision, the child should be referred to a pediatric ophthalmologist for care. It is important for a child to be referred as soon as there are any concerns about their vision because it becomes more difficult to treat amblyopia as children age.

**Treatment of Amblyopia**

If a patient’s amblyopia is caused by one of the vision problems described above, it may be best to treat that condition first. For example, strabismus caused by a refractive error may be improved with eyeglasses. The next step is to work on training the brain to use the weaker eye again to help it get stronger. This may be done with an eye patch over the stronger eye. This forces the brain to use the other eye and help it get stronger. If children struggle with using the eye patch daily, an eye drop (atropine) can be used for a similar effect.

**Treatment for amblyopia**

Most solutions involve reducing vision in the dominant eye to force the brain to rely on the weak eye and improve its function.

It can take months to years to fully correct the condition, and some children require more treatment as time goes on. In some children, treatment may never be fully successful.

**FOR MORE INFORMATION**


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