

Amblyopia: Causes and Treatments



What causes amblyopia?

Amblyopia has two main causes:

- Poor vision in one eye. This prompts the brain to ignore the blurry pictures seen by that eye.
- Strabismus, a condition that occurs when a child's eyes aren't straight (aligned). The eyes don't work together. This causes the brain to ignore one eye.

Treatments for amblyopia

Amblyopia is most often treated by blocking one eye to keep it from doing all the work. The brain can learn to accept signals from the eye that was being ignored. The vision in this eye may slowly improve.

- An eye patch is placed over the eye that's being used. With this eye blocked, the brain is forced to start working with the eye it had been ignoring. The patch must be worn while your child is awake. Your child may not like wearing a patch. But remember that treatment will work only if your child wears the patch as often as instructed.
- Medicated (atropine) eye drops can be used instead of a patch. Drops are put in the eye that's being used, blurring vision in that eye to keep it from doing all the work. This allows the eye that was being ignored to start working with the brain. Eye drops may be an option for children who don't like wearing a patch. But putting in eye drops can take practice.
- Eyeglasses can help correct focusing problems. They can also be prescribed to blur sight in the eye that's being used. This forces the brain to work with the eye it has been ignoring. In some cases, sight in one eye is blocked by sticking a patch or a filter to the inside of an eyeglass lens. As vision improves, your child's eyeglass prescription may change.

Goals of amblyopia treatment

- Correct the problem that's causing amblyopia.
- Make each eye see as well as it can.
- Force the brain to use the signals from both eyes.
- Make both eyes work together.

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