

Amblyopia



What is amblyopia?

Amblyopia (known more commonly as “lazy eye”) is the loss or lack of development of vision that is unrelated to any eye health problem. The brain, for different reasons, does not acknowledge the images seen by the amblyopic eye. Reduced vision due to amblyopia is not correctable with lenses alone. It is important that your child receives a thorough optometric exam early in life to prevent amblyopia.

Who is likely to develop amblyopia?

Amblyopia is generally the result of poor early visual development usually occurring before the age of eight. Infants born prematurely, or with low birth weight, are at a greater risk for the development of the condition. It is estimated that 2-4% of children have amblyopia.

What causes amblyopia?

Amblyopia usually results from a failure to use both eyes together. It can be caused by the presence of strabismus (an eye turn), unequal refractive error (farsightedness, nearsightedness, or astigmatism), or a physical obstruction of vision (cataract or eyelid abnormalities). If there is a large enough difference in the degree of refractive error between the two eyes, or if there is an eye turn, the brain learns to ignore one image in favor of the other and weaker vision in one eye is the result.

How does amblyopia affect vision?

Normally, the images sent by each eye to the brain are identical. When they differ too much, the brain learns to ignore the poor image sent by one eye and uses only the good eye. The vision of the eye that is ignored becomes weaker from disuse.

Is the amblyopic eye blind?

The amblyopic eye is never blind in the sense of being entirely without sight. Amblyopia affects only the central vision of the affected eye. Peripheral awareness will remain the same, though if left untreated, the amblyopic eye may never be capable of seeing 20/20, and in fact may see far worse.

What are the signs/symptoms of amblyopia?

Amblyopia usually produces few symptoms. It may be accompanied by an eye turn or a large difference in refractive error between the eyes. A child may also exhibit noticeable favoring of one eye and may have a tendency to bump into objects on one side.

How is amblyopia diagnosed?

Vista Eye Care's comprehensive eye and vision examination can determine the presence and severity of amblyopia. Our Thornton, Colorado eye doctors will carefully assess your child's visual acuity. The earlier amblyopia is diagnosed, the greater the chance for a successful treatment. Since amblyopia typically occurs only in one eye, the good eye takes over and the individual is generally unaware of the condition. That is why it is important to have your child's vision examined at about six months of age, at age three, and again before he or she enters school. Vista Eye Care participates in the American Optometric Association's InfantSEE program. This program allows your 6-12 month old child to receive a complete comprehensive exam at no cost.

How is amblyopia treated?

Corrective lenses, prisms, and/or contact lenses are often used to treat amblyopia. Covering or occluding the better eye, either part-time or full-time, may be used to stimulate vision in the amblyopic eye. In some cases, our optometrists may prescribe contact lenses for infants who are unable to wear spectacles.

Does amblyopia get worse?

Vision in the amblyopic eye may continue to decrease if left untreated. The brain simply pays less and less attention to the images sent by the amblyopic eye. Eventually, the condition stabilizes and the eye becomes virtually unused. This occurs somewhere around 8-10 years of age. It is quite difficult to effectively treat amblyopia at this point.

Is amblyopia preventable?

Early detection and treatment of amblyopia and significantly unequal refractive errors can help reduce the chance of one eye becoming amblyopic.

How great a handicap is amblyopia?

Amblyopia is a handicap because it can limit the occupational and leisure activities the patient can do. Activities requiring good depth perception may be difficult or impossible to perform. In addition, should the patient's good eye become injured or develop vision problems, they may have difficulty maintaining their normal activities.

Please call our office today at **(303) 450-2020** to schedule your child's annual comprehensive eye exam or schedule online

