



Amblyopia in children

✧ What is amblyopia?

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Commonly known as “lazy eye,” it is a condition in which one or both eyes have reduced visual function, or even none at all.

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If recognized in time and treated appropriately, amblyopia can be resolved: using simple orthoptic treatments, it is possible to improve visual acuity with very satisfactory results in the vast majority of cases. Generally, amblyopia is associated with visual defects such as myopia (short-sightedness), hypermetropia (long-sightedness), and astigmatism. For this reason, a comprehensive eye examination is particularly useful, which enables an accurate clinical picture to be obtained.

There is in fact, a so-called “critical period” of development of the visual system, between six and eight years old. Before this period, it is crucial to act promptly to achieve maximum visual recovery.

✧ What causes it?

Amblyopia has a range of possible causes, including strabismus, congenital visual abnormalities, anisometropia (the condition in which each eye has a different vision impairment, e.g., myopia in one eye and hypermetropia in the other), or when there is a difference of more than 4 dioptres between the two eyes.

How amblyopia is treated

✧ Eye-patching

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One of the techniques used to improve the visual capacity of a child with amblyopia is patching, or covering the dominant eye with a patch.

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By stimulating the general activity and visual fixation skills of the lazy eye, this technique improves its visual acuity.

The patch must be worn when the child is active, to force the lazy eye to look at and fix on objects as much as possible without the support of the stronger eye.

✧ Some rules to follow

To promote the effectiveness of the treatment, it is necessary to scrupulously follow the instructions and timings indicated by the orthoptist. These can also differ considerably from child to child, depending on the different visual conditions.

It is imperative not to interrupt the therapy earlier than scheduled, and to carefully follow the timing and methods of applying the eye patch supplied at the orthoptic assessment.

The diagnostic assessment takes place during the first visit. Subsequent checkups and diagnostic tests will allow the effectiveness of the treatment and the improvement in visual acuity to be ascertained.

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