



Patient Information Leaflet
Squint



The Eye Care Team

An OPTHALMOLOGIST is a doctor who specialises in eye disorders.

An ORTHOPTIST is specifically trained to assess children with squint and “lazy eye.” The orthoptist will be the person most closely involved in your child’s treatment.

An Optometrist tests for and prescribes glasses, if required.

What is a squint?

A squint means that one eye is out of alignment ie. one eye looks straight ahead whilst the other eye turns inwards, outwards, up or down. Squints may be constant (apparent at all times) or intermittent (only apparent at certain times). Most squints develop before 3 years of age, but may develop at a later age.

How does a squint affect eyesight?

Children DO Not grow out of true squints. It is therefore essential they are examined by an eye specialist to assess the squint and the eyesight. When a squint is present in childhood the child may stop using the squinting eye leading to poor sight in that eye. This is commonly called a “lazy eye”.



What are the most common risk factors for developing a squint?

Uncorrected need for glasses - long-sightedness is the most common cause for an esotropia (the eye turns in).

Family history - if a family member such as a parent or sibling have a squint there is an increased risk that their child or sibling will develop a squint.

Prematurity or low birth weight - children born before 32 weeks and/ or with low birth weight are at an increased risk of developing a squint. Children with other conditions such as cerebral palsy are at a higher risk of developing a squint.

What will happen at the appointment?

You will be seen by an orthoptist and other members of the eye care team as required. There is a short video on the children's eye unit website (<https://belfasttrust.hscni.net/service/childrens-eye-services/>) that will show you what to expect and introduce you to the team. The appointment length can vary depending who your child needs to see.

Treatment options of squint

Your child will require multiple clinic visits to observe the squint and plan each step of treatment. Treatment may include

(i) Glasses

It is important to test for glasses and for your child to wear them if they are prescribed. Your child will usually need to wear them constantly so that the orthoptist can assess how they affect the eyesight and the squint.

There are many types of squint, some squints can be fully corrected by glasses alone and will not need an operation. Even when the squint is corrected with glasses it will still be noticeable without glasses.

In other cases, glasses can partially improve the squint and/or improve the eyesight.

In some cases glasses have no effect on the squint, but they may still be needed to obtain the best vision.



(ii) Amblyopia (Laze eye) treatment

If poor sight persists in the squinting (lazy) eye then vision treatment may be needed. Treatment options for a lazy eye include patching or atropine eye drops. This treatment DOES NOT straighten the eye, but is VERY important as it is the most effective method of improving the sight in the “lazy eye.” Although this can be carried out until approximately 7-9 years old, the best results are achieved in younger children. The amount and duration of treatment varies from one child to another. It also depends on the level of poor vision, age and co-operation of the child.

(i) Operation

If the squint remains noticeable and cosmetically poor (with glasses, if worn) then an operation to improve the appearance may be considered. Usually, this is only considered when glasses are being worn well and are of the correct strength, and patching treatment has been well established.

The operation will not improve the eyesight. Children will still need to wear glasses after the surgery and may still need patching.

Your out-patient appointments

Most children will be followed up by the orthoptist and optometrist, only seeing the doctor if it is necessary. Follow-up may be for some years.

If you have any questions which are not answered in this leaflet, please do not hesitate to ask the staff in the Eye Department who will be happy to try and answer them for you.

E
F P
T O Z
L P E
P E C F
E D F C Z





Orthoptic Department, Level 8A, Outpatients, Royal Group of Hospitals,
Belfast Health & Social Care Trust, Grosvenor Road, Belfast, BT12 6BA.

Tel: 028