



# ANSWERS TO YOUR QUESTIONS ABOUT: **AMBLYOPIA**

## **What is amblyopia?**

Amblyopia is the lack of development of normal vision in one or both eyes. The decreased vision is not caused by a current health problem, and eyeglasses or contact lenses can't fully correct the reduced vision caused by amblyopia.

## **Who is likely to develop amblyopia?**

The amblyopic eye usually develops in early childhood. It is estimated that two to three percent of children have amblyopia.

Amblyopia can result from any condition that interferes with the ability of both eyes to work together or to see equally clear. A turned eye, or strabismus, is the most common cause of amblyopia. Amblyopia also occurs due to a significant difference in the amount of nearsightedness, farsightedness, or astigmatism present between each eye. In some cases, it is caused by a physical obstruction of vision in one eye such as a cataract present at birth, a very droopy eyelid, or significant injury to the cornea (the clear outer surface of the eye) or lens during childhood.

## **What causes amblyopia?**

Amblyopia usually results from either the inability to coordinate both eyes together, with one eye turning in or out as the other eye looks straight toward an object, or a significant difference in how clearly each eye sees. In either case, the visual images each eye sends to the brain are different. Consequently, the brain ignores the poorer image to avoid double vision. As a result, only the better eye is used for seeing, and visual skills do not fully develop in the affected eye.

## **Is the amblyopic eye blind?**

The amblyopic eye is never blind in the sense of being entirely without sight.

## **What are the signs/symptoms of amblyopia?**

Signs and symptoms of amblyopia may not be obvious. In most cases, a child can see clearly with one eye, and therefore may not notice or report any problems with vision.

Amblyopia may be accompanied by an eye that appears to cross or wander, a condition called strabismus. A child who has a strabismus is at high risk for developing amblyopia, although not all cases of eye turns result in amblyopia.

Some signs of a amblyopia may include noticeably favoring one eye, constant head turning or tilting, or a tendency to bump into objects on one side.

## **How is amblyopia diagnosed?**

A comprehensive optometric examination can determine the presence of amblyopia.

## **How is amblyopia treated?**

Treatment for amblyopia depends on the specific factors that caused its development. In most cases, treatment will include:

- Correcting nearsightedness, farsightedness, or astigmatism with eyeglasses or contact lenses to provide the clearest possible vision in each eye.
- Covering/patching or blurring the vision in the better eye to force usage and strengthening of the amblyopic eye.
- Doing a series of prescribed eye exercises called vision therapy to improve eye-movement, eye-teaming, and eye-focusing abilities.

## **Is amblyopia preventable?**

Early detection and treatment of eye conditions that cause amblyopia are critical. If not treated in time, a permanent loss of vision can occur due to the lack of opportunity for vision development in the eye. Early diagnosis and treatment increase the chances of regaining nearly normal vision in the amblyopic eye. This is one reason why the American Optometric Association recommends children have a comprehensive optometric examination at six months and again at three years. An amblyopic eye will not improve on its own.