

What is Amblyopia?

Amblyopia is a term used to describe an uncorrectable loss of vision in an eye that appears to be normal. It's commonly referred to as "lazy eye" and can occur for a variety of reasons.

A child's visual system is fully developed between approximately the age of 9 to 11. Until then, children readily adapt to visual problems by suppressing or blocking out the image. If caught early, the problem can often be corrected, and the vision preserved. However, after about age 11, it is difficult, if not impossible to train the brain to use the eye normally. If the eye doesn't develop properly in childhood, vision will be limited as an adult.

Some causes of amblyopia include: strabismus (crossed or turned eye), congenital cataracts, cloudy cornea, droopy eyelid, unequal vision and uncorrected nearsightedness, farsightedness, or astigmatism. Amblyopia may occur in various degrees depending on the severity of the underlying problem. Some patients just experience a partial loss; others are only able to recognize motion.

Patients with amblyopia lack binocular vision, or stereopsis -the ability to blend the images of both eyes together. Stereopsis is what allows us to appreciate depth. Without it, the ability to judge distance is impaired.

Signs and Symptoms of Amblyopia

- Poor vision in one or both eyes
- Squinting or closing one eye while reading or watching television
- Crossed or turned eye
- Turning or tilting the head when looking at an object

How is Amblyopia detected?

When amblyopia is suspected, the doctor will evaluate the following: vision, eye alignment, eye movements, and fusion (the brain's ability to blend two images into a single image).