

# Eyes Right! Find Amblyopia Early



*Good vision depends on the eyes and the brain working together. The pathway between the eyes and the brain can be affected when one eye sees more clearly than the other. The eye with less clear vision is not used as often and becomes even weaker. This condition is called amblyopia, or “lazy eye.”*

## What causes amblyopia?

Any condition that causes the brain to favor one eye and ignore the image in the other may cause amblyopia. Common causes include crossed eyes, cataracts, eyes that differ a lot in the degree of nearsightedness or farsightedness.

## When should amblyopia be treated?

Early treatment is easier and more likely to be successful than treatment that begins after age 5. All children should have a formal eye test before age 5. Have a child examined for amblyopia if one eye turns in or out, the eyes don't appear to move together, the child seems to consistently prefer one eye over the other, the child has poor depth perception, or you believe he has a problem with vision. Often, amblyopia can be detected only by an eye doctor.

## How is amblyopia treated?

Treatment focuses on increasing the use of the weaker eye. Children often wear an eye patch on the stronger eye, take eye drops to temporarily blur vision in that eye, or wear corrective lenses. Surgery may be necessary first for some conditions, such as crossed eyes or cataracts. Treatment continues until vision is normal or a doctor determines it is no longer improving. Parents can call the Illinois Vision and Hearing Program at (800) 545-2200 for more information. If a child is not covered by health insurance, parents can call (866) 255-5437 for information about All Kids, the state health insurance program for children.

## What if my child objects to the eye patch?

Sometimes children resist wearing the eye patch. They see less well through the weaker eye and may find that adhesive patches irritate their skin. Be sure to tell the child why the patch is necessary in terms she can understand. Try including some special time for fun when the patch is put on. Keeping the child active with small motor tasks such as eating or drawing will reduce her focus on the patch while requiring the visual system to work. Set simple rules, such as only Mom or Dad can touch the patch. Use a timer to sound when patch time is over. Let her decorate her patches. Prevent Blindness America offers an Eye Patch Club that kids can join. Call (800) 331-2020.

*The opinions, resources, and referrals provided in this Tip Sheet are intended for information purposes only and should not be considered or used as a substitute for medical advice, diagnosis, or treatment. We advise parents to seek the advice of a physician or other qualified health care provider with questions regarding their child's health or medical conditions.*

---

Any opinions, findings, conclusions, or recommendations expressed in this tip sheet are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Illinois State Board of Education.



Children's Research Center  
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign  
51 Gerty Dr. • Champaign, IL 61820-7469  
Telephone: 217-333-1386  
Toll-free: 877-275-3227  
E-mail: [iel@illinois.edu](mailto:iel@illinois.edu)  
<https://illinoisearlylearning.org>



**Illinois**  
State Board of  
Education