

## SQUINTS (STRABISMUS)

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### SQUINTS (STRABISMUS)

A squint, or strabismus, is present when the two eyes are not looking in the same direction. It may be apparent all the time or only when the person is tired, unwell, or focusing on a near or distant object. The eye may turn in or out, or one eye may sit higher than the other. A squint may vary depending on the gaze position.

Babies often have the appearance of a squint due to the comparatively wide bridge of their noses, but this appearance is lost as the face develops.

However, a child with a true squint will not grow out of it, so all children with suspected squints should be seen by an eye specialist. Squints can also be seen in adults, either as a long standing problem or following a nerve palsy.

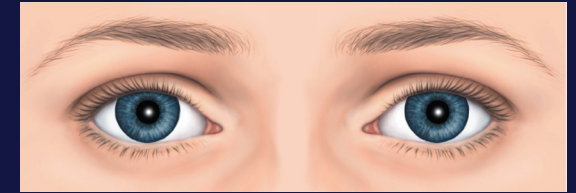
### CAUSES OF SQUINTS

Squints may arise in the first few months of life. However, they can also appear in older children. Some children have poorly developed binocular vision (ability to use the eyes together to achieve 3-D vision) and a squint can develop from this. If a squint is present, the misalignment means that the eyes will lose the ability to work together and achieve binocular vision.

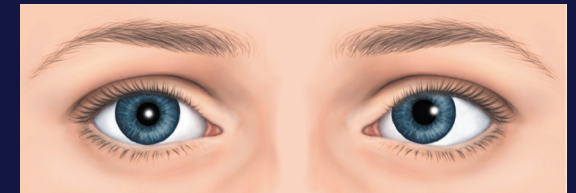
Children may be far-sighted and have a focusing problem. The effort of focusing in order to see clearly can lead to a squint developing. Glasses alone may correct this problem.

Very occasionally, a child may develop a squint because there is a problem with the eye, and it has defective sight. The earlier this is detected, the sooner treatment can be started.

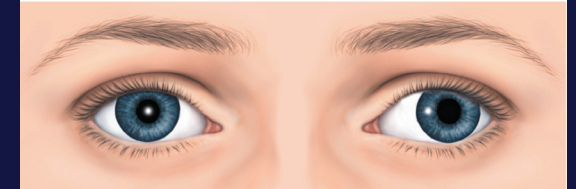
If a child squints with one eye, then the vision in that eye will become lazy (amblyopic), as the brain ignores information from the squinting eye.



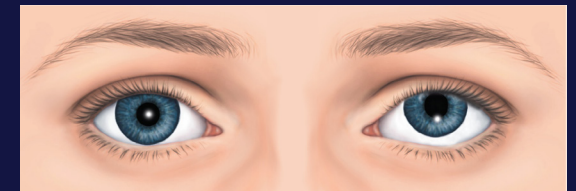
NORMAL EYES



LEFT ESOTROPIA



LEFT EXOTROPIA



LEFT HYPERTROPIA



## EFFECTS OF A SQUINT

In a child, the squint may develop into a lazy eye (amblyopia). If untreated, this can lead to:

- Long term poor sight in that eye.
- Loss of binocular vision.
- Cosmetic issues.

For adults, double vision is the main symptom.

## WHEN TO SEEK TREATMENT

If you suspect your child has a squint, they should be seen by an eye specialist without delay, even if they are a baby.

Adults should seek prompt attention with an ophthalmologist if they develop a new squint. Some squints in adults can indicate serious problems that can be better treated if they are found early. In most cases, adults who develop squints also get double vision and if this happens, you should see someone quickly. Some adults may be prescribed glasses with special prisms in them to help correct their double vision.

## NON-SURGICAL TREATMENTS

**Glasses** will be prescribed if there is a focusing error, particularly with far-sightedness. This may be enough to keep the eyes straight.

If a child squints with one eye only, then this eye will become lazy. **Patching** of the good eye is used in this case. The aim is to improve the vision in the lazy eye to a similar level of vision as the good eye achieves.

The child will then be able to use either eye to see and the squint will switch from one eye to the other (alternation), which is the aim of the treatment. Patching improves the vision but does not cure the squint.



## SURGERY

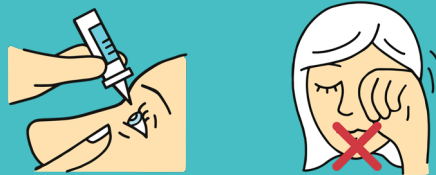
If the appearance of a squint is obvious, surgery may be carried out to move the eye muscles, in one or both eyes, to straighten the eye(s).

Strabismus surgery can be performed at almost any age. In children, surgery is usually performed between the ages of 6 months and 4 years. In adults, it may be performed at any convenient time once the squint has stabilised.

Strabismus surgery is performed as a day stay procedure under general anaesthesia. It usually takes 30-45 minutes per eye.

## RECOVERY

Following your surgery, you may experience headaches during the first two days. Your eyelids may be a little swollen and difficult to open, and you may experience a 'scratchy' irritation. Your surgeon may prescribe eye drops to alleviate this. Do not rub the eye or eyes.



Allow that you may need 3-10 days off work and school. You should also avoid strenuous activity during this time.



It can take up to two months for results of the surgery to stabilise. For this reason, follow-up appointments are important.



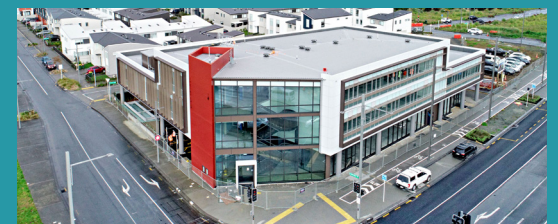
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