

Patient information

Squints in children

What is a squint?

A squint is a misalignment of two eyes so that they do not point together towards the same object. An eye may turn in (convergent squint) or turn out (divergent squint). Occasionally one eye may be higher or lower than the other (vertical squint). The squint may be constant (present at all times) or occur only intermittently.

What is a lazy eye?

If the eyes are not looking in the same direction then they are sending different signals to the brain causing a double image. In order to stop this the brain ignores one of them. If it ignores the same eye for a long time the vision in that eye can become lazy (Amblyopia).

What causes a squint?

There are six muscles attached to the outside of the each eye that are responsible for eye movements. When there is an imbalance of these muscles, a squint occurs. The cause of the squint may not be obvious but can include a family history, long or short sightedness, injury or viral illness.

Why do squints happen?

A squint can occur for a number of different reasons, these include:

- Poor vision in one or both eyes.
- A need for glasses.
- Poor development of the eye muscle control centres in the brain.
- Damage to the nerves controlling the eye muscles.

Why is diagnosis and assessment important?

- A squint can cause the sight in that eye to weaken; this is called amblyopia or a lazy eye. Over several years this loss of vision can become irreversible.
- A worsening squint can prevent the development of 3D vision.
- A large squint can be a cosmetic problem, which can affect your child's self-confidence, especially once at school.

Who will I see?

Paediatric Ophthalmologist: A surgeon specialised in treating eye problems in childhood.

Orthoptist: A professional specialised in the assessment, diagnosis and management of visual development and squints in children.

Paediatric nurse: A nurse specialised in dealing with children.

Can squints be treated?

A full assessment of your child's eye and vision is performed and the cause of the squint is assessed.

- If the squint is intermittent then it will be necessary to watch and document any change.
- Sometimes it is possible to treat the squint with glasses or exercises.
- If one eye has poor vision it may be necessary to patch the good eye to encourage the weak eye to work harder. This may help to control the squint.
- An operation may be required.

If my child needs an operation what happens next?

Your child will be sent an appointment for pre-assessment 2-4 weeks before the operation date. Your child will see an orthoptist who will measure the size of the squint. The surgeon will see you and your child to discuss the details of the surgery. You will then be asked to sign a form to say that you understand the type of operation that is going to be performed. A paediatric nurse will discuss your child's general health and explain what happens on the day of surgery.

Are there any risks?

Although most squint operations successfully straighten the eyes all surgery carries risks and squint surgery is no different. The following are recognized risks:

- There may be some bruising on the eye, which can make it look red for a few weeks.
- There may be under or over correction of the squint.
- They may get some double vision although this often settles.

- Loss of vision is very **rare**. This may be caused by bleeding inside the eye or infection.

The result of squint surgery is not completely predictable as the healing and the brain-eye coordination are variable. If the eye is not quite straight after the operation it may settle by the three month post-op appointment. If it does not then we may need to do a further operation to improve the position of the eyes.

If you wish to contact the Eye Department

Telephone 01284 713815 / 01284 712636

Monday to Thursday 9.00am – 5.00pm

Friday 9.00am – 1.00pm

West Suffolk NHS Foundation Trust is actively involved in clinical research. Your doctor, clinical team or the research and development department may contact you regarding specific clinical research studies that you might be interested in participating in. If you do not wish to be contacted for these purposes, please email info.gov@wsh.nhs.uk. This will in no way affect the care or treatment you receive.

If you would like any information regarding access to the West Suffolk Hospital and its facilities please visit the website for AccessAble (formerly DisabledGo) <https://www.accessable.co.uk/organisations/west-suffolk-nhs-foundation-trust>



© West Suffolk NHS Foundation Trust