

HealthWatch: Catch "Lazy Eye" Early



Does your child favor one eye over the other? Do they complain that they can see better from one eye than the other?

If so, the eye may be worth getting checked out by your family eye doctor. One such condition that may be causing this is amblyopia, more commonly known as 'lazy eye.'

According to the Prevent Blindness America Organization (PBA), amblyopia is a reduced vision in an eye that hasn't been adequately used during early childhood. The organization estimates 2 to 3 percent of the general population suffers from this vision problem.

It is a major cause for vision loss in children, but the good news is that, if caught early, it is treatable. The key is to catch it early - it becomes less treatable the older your child gets. After age 9, vision loss from amblyopia generally is permanent.

Amblyopia is caused by several factors. They include a misalignment of a child's eyes or a difference in image quality between the two eyes, where one eye focuses better than the other does. In both of these situations, one eye becomes stronger, suppressing the image of the other eye.

If the condition continues, there is a chance the weaker eye might become useless, never develop good vision or, in some instances, become functionally blind.

The American Optometric Association recommends that children have a comprehensive optometric examination by the age of six months and again at age three. As in any case, the earlier the diagnosis, the better the chances for restoring the vision.

Check with your family eye doctor for more information on amblyopia, or visit the College of Optometrists for Vision Development website at HYPERLINK "<http://www.covd.org>" www.covd.org. Check with your family eye doctor for more information on amblyopia, or visit the College of Optometrists for Vision Development website at HYPERLINK "<http://www.covd.org>" www.covd.org.

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