

## **Amblyopia**

### **Frequently Asked Questions about Amblyopia**

#### **Q: What is amblyopia?**

Amblyopia is reduced vision in an eye that has not received adequate use during early childhood.

#### **Q: What causes amblyopia?**

Amblyopia means “without sight.” Amblyopia has many causes, among them a “lazy” eye. Amblyopia most often results from this “lazy” or misalignment of a child’s eye. A “lazy” eye is seen by an observer as crossed eyes, or divergent eyes. Amblyopia also results from a difference in image quality between the two eyes (one eye focusing better than the other). In both cases (misalignment and weaker focusing) one eye becomes stronger than the other. If this condition persists, the weaker eye may become useless.

#### **Q: Can anything be done to treat amblyopia and prevent vision loss?**

With early diagnosis and treatment, the vision in the “lazy eye” may be restored.

#### **Q: When should treatment for amblyopia begin?**

The earlier the treatment, the better the opportunity to reverse the vision loss.

#### **Q: What treatments are available?**

Before treating amblyopia, it may be necessary to first treat the underlying cause.

Glasses are commonly prescribed to improve focusing or misalignment of the eyes. In extreme cases surgery may be required to allow both eyes to work together. Eye exercises are a limited form of treatment.

#### **Q: What treatment follows the correction of the underlying cause?**

The correction may be followed by:

Patching or covering one eye may be required for a period of time ranging from a few weeks to as long as a year. The better-seeing eye is patched, forcing the “lazy” one to work, thereby strengthening its vision.

Medication – in the form of eye drops or ointment – may be used to blur the vision of the good eye in order to force the weaker one to work. This is generally a less successful approach.

#### **Q: What happens if amblyopia goes untreated?**

If not treated early enough, an amblyopic eye may never develop good vision and may even become functionally blind.

#### **Q: How many people have amblyopia?**

It is estimated that four to five percent of the population suffers from this form of visual impairment.

We recommend this new vision testing method as part of your child’s wellness program. If you have additional questions please feel free to ask your child’s practitioner.