



AMBLYOPIA

(LAZY EYE)

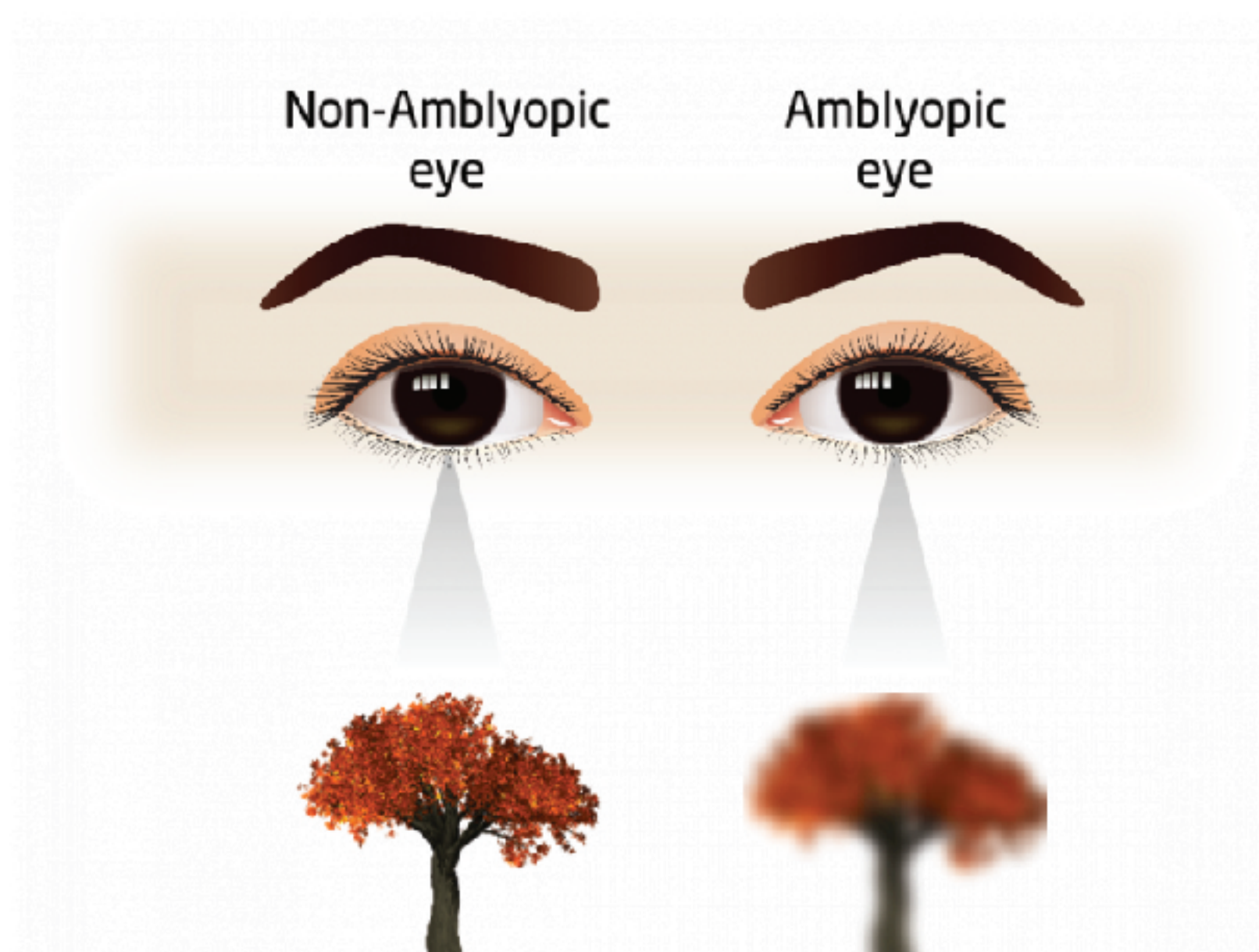


What is Amblyopia?

Amblyopia is the medical term for Lazy Eye. The brain and the eye, work in coordination for good vision. Lazy Eye can happen if there is deprivation of vision due to any cause, such as uncorrected refractive errors, childhood cataract, trauma, retinal issues, squint, etc. If one or both eyes are affected, the brain will not recognise the input from that eye and this leads to amblyopia. Vision usually matures by the age of 8 years which is why it is important to identify and treat amblyopia at an early age.

How common is Amblyopia?

Amblyopia is one of the most common causes of poor vision in childhood and monocular (one eye) impairment among all age groups. The condition affects approximately 2 to 3 out of every 100 children.



What causes Amblyopia?

Amblyopia may be caused by any condition that affects normal visual development or not using both eyes simultaneously.

The causes for amblyopia are:

- Squint (Crossed eyes)
- Uncorrected refractive errors (spectacle power)
- Any other factor that blocks the entry of light into the eye like cataract, corneal scar etc

How is Amblyopia diagnosed?

Identifying amblyopia is not easy. A child will not complain of poor vision especially if it is only in one eye. Unless there is an obvious cause like cataract or misalignment between the 2 eyes, parents may not identify lazy eye. It is important to get a complete eye examination by a pediatric ophthalmologist at ages 1, 3 and 5 years and every 2 years thereafter. However, they need to come earlier if there is a family history of eye diseases or poor vision in family members. An ophthalmologist detects amblyopia by doing various tests in the OPD. If after closing one eye, the child resists, cries, it may imply poor vision in the eye that is not closed.

Why should Amblyopia be treated?

If it is not detected and treated early, it may result in permanent poor vision in that eye and loss of the three dimensional (depth) perception (3D vision). Some professions such as aviation, military, etc may not recruit individuals with amblyopia.

How is Amblyopia treated in children?

Treating amblyopia involves making the child use the lazy or weaker eye along with treating the cause of the amblyopia. Currently, there are two ways to do this:

- **Patching:**

An opaque, adhesive patch is worn over the stronger eye for few hours every day, depending on the age and intensity, for weeks to months.

- **Pharmacotherapy:**

Certain eye drops maybe prescribed to blur the vision in the stronger eye to allow vision in the weaker eye to improve.





- **Software based Amblyopia therapy:**

Dichoptic therapy involves binocular stimulation of eyes where in each eye can be stimulated at different levels using special glasses.

Both these methods force the use of the amblyopic eye. It helps stimulate vision in the weaker eye and indirectly improves the connections to the brain.

Once the vision is restored in the weaker eye, treatment needs to be continued on a maintenance therapy to prevent reverting back to poor vision.

This treatment needs to be given only after having treated the primary cause like removal of cataract, prescription of glasses. In case of a squint, the treatment would start before surgery and continue there after.

What is the ideal time to treat?

As development of vision occurs from day 1 of birth and matures by 6-8 years of age, the best time to detect and treat amblyopia successfully would be before 8 years of age. However, therapy can restore some vision even in older children. While there is ongoing research on therapy in adulthood, its effectiveness is not as promising as when it is administered during childhood. The success of therapy for amblyopia depends on factors such as the severity of the condition, the child's age, and their adherence to treatment, which can vary for each child.

Can Amblyopia be treated in adults?

Studies in adults are very limited at this time and scientists are still exploring whether treatment can improve vision completely.

FAQs

- **Can patching be done during school hours?**

It is recommended not to do so as the child's scholastic performance may suffer and he/she may also lose confidence in front of peers and may face ridicule at school.

- **Can the child sleep with the patch?**

No, after patching the eye, the child should be made to use the eye by doing some near work activity, homework, etc that will act as a stimulus for the eye to improve the vision.

- **What happens if my child develops allergic reaction to patching?**

This maybe due to the adhesive used. Try to change the material, shape and size of the patch.

- **How long does the treatment last?**

It takes few weeks to months for the vision to improve and few require maintenance upto 8 to 10 years.

Pediatric

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