

What is a Squint?

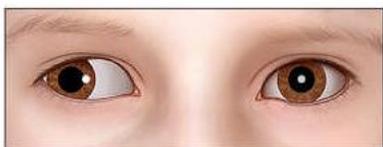
A squint is a condition in which the eyes are not aligned correctly. One eye is looking straight and the other eye is looking in a different direction. The eye may turn inwards or outwards or it may sit higher or lower than the other eye. This means the eyes are no longer working together. A squint may also be called strabismus.

Approximately 2-4% of children have a squint.

Esotropia



Exotropia



Hypertropia



What causes a squint?

There are many types of squints with a variety of causes. In some cases the cause is unknown. A squint should always be assessed by an Orthoptist even if it isn't there all the time.

A squint can occur at any age and often runs in families. A child is never too young to be examined by an Orthoptist or treatment to start. Often the sooner treatment is started the better the result.

A squint may occur because the child is longsighted and they are putting in extra effort and straining the eyes to see clearly

If a child has an eye problem reducing the vision in one or both eyes, the child may be unable to use both eyes together and a squint can develop. If a child has been ill, a squint may develop. This usually means that the child always had a tendency to squint, but the illness has left them unable to control it and a squint has been revealed.

Other family members may have had a squint or glasses in childhood.

How does a squint affect my child?

Your child will stop using the squinting eye. If it is always the same eye that turns, the vision in that eye will not

develop and the eye will become lazy (amblyopia). If left untreated, this can lead to long term poor sight in that eye. When a child has a squint and is ignoring one eye he/she will no longer have binocular vision.

A squint can be a cosmetic problem.

Occasionally a child with a squint can experience double vision.

How can a squint be treated?

There are many aspects of the squint that need to be treated. Your child may need one or all of the following treatments. An individual course of treatment will be selected for your child by the Orthoptist and/or Ophthalmologist. Most treatments will require regular visits to the Orthoptist.

Glasses: If your child needs glasses to correct the focusing problem of the eye this will be most commonly for full time wear. When the child wears the glasses well, you will often notice the squint more without the glasses. This is because the glasses allow the child to focus normally and keep their eyes straighter.

Patching: Your child may need some patching treatment. This is done to encourage the vision to improve in the squinting eye. Patching will not improve a squint. The orthoptist will discuss how much patching needs to be done.

Eye drops: Eye drops are used to blur the vision in the good eye to encourage the vision to improve in the squinting eye. Eye drops will not improve a squint.

Surgery: If the glasses do not straighten the squint or your child doesn't need glasses, surgery may be required to reposition the muscles on the eyeball to straighten the eye. Surgery will be done by an Ophthalmologist (eye-specialist).

Who will be involved in the treatment of a child's eyes?

Ophthalmologist: The Ophthalmologist (eye-specialist) will be responsible for your child's general eye care and will perform the surgery, if indicated and may prescribe glasses.

Orthoptist: The Orthoptist is specialised in the treatment of squints, amblyopia and children's eye development. The Orthoptist will monitor your child's vision and patching or eye-drop treatment you are doing. They will also assess your child's squint and take the necessary measurements before any surgery is carried out.

Optometrist: Your local Optometrist will provide you with glasses. Sometimes the Optometrist will carry out the glasses test and change the strength of the lenses when necessary.

How do I find out more about my child's eye condition?

Your child and his/her squint are individual; no two squints should be compared. If you have any questions or difficulties with your child's eye and the treatment do not hesitate to ask your Orthoptist or Ophthalmologist for advice. With your child's records at hand, it is easier to answer any specific questions.

Children's book on squint:

My traveling eye by Jenny Sue Kosteck-Shaw

Orthoptist name:

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Contact details:

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New Zealand Orthoptic Society Inc.



Squints (strabismus) in Children

Patient information leaflet