



What is a squint?

This leaflet explains what a squint is, how it affects vision and what the treatment or management options are.

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A squint, also known as strabismus, is a common eye condition where the eyes do not align properly. Normally, both eyes work together to focus on an object, but in a squint, one eye may turn inwards, outwards, upwards, or downwards, while the other eye remains straight. This misalignment can be constant or occasional.

What causes a squint?

A squint can be caused by various factors, including:

- **Muscle imbalance:** When the muscles controlling eye movement are imbalanced, it can lead to misalignment.
- **Nerve issues:** Problems with the nerves responsible for eye movement can result in a squint.
- **Refractive errors:** Unequal vision or significant differences in the prescription between the two eyes can contribute to a squint.
- **Genetic factors:** Squints can sometimes run in families.

Types of squints

1. **Esotropia:** One eye turns inward, towards the nose.
2. **Exotropia:** One eye turns outward, away from the nose.
3. **Hypertropia:** One eye turns upward.
4. **Hypotropia:** One eye turns downward.

What are the signs and symptoms of a squint?

The following signs and symptoms may indicate the presence of a squint:

- **Misalignment of the eyes:** One eye appears deviated from the normal position.
- **Double vision:** Seeing two images instead of one, especially when both eyes are open.

- **Struggling with depth perception:** Difficulty judging distances accurately.
- **Eye fatigue or strain:** Frequent eye rubbing or discomfort.

How is a squint diagnosed?

To diagnose a squint, an eye care specialist will perform a thorough examination, including tests to assess eye movements, visual acuity (sharpness), and binocular vision (how well both eyes work together).

What are the treatment options?

- **Glasses or contact lenses:** Correcting refractive errors with eyewear can sometimes improve the squint.
- **Eye exercises:** Targeted exercises may be given to improve eye coordination and control.
- **Patching:** If a child has reduced vision in the affected eye, patching treatment can be offered.
- **Medications:** In some cases, medications may be recommended to address underlying eye muscle issues.
- **Surgery:** An operation may be necessary to correct the alignment of the eyes and improve their functionality, if all other treatment options are not successful.
- **Botox:** As a temporary alternative to surgery Botox can be done on eye muscles to help improve eye alignment

How long does treatment last?

- **Non-surgical treatments:** non-surgical treatments such as the use of corrective glasses, eye exercises, and patching can last from a few weeks to several months. Glasses may need to be worn consistently to correct any refractive errors contributing to the squint. Eye exercises and patching may be recommended for a specific period each day, and how long you have to do them will vary, based on the individual's progress and response to the treatment.
- **Surgical treatments:** If a squint does not improve or is too severe to be corrected with non-surgical methods, an operation may be required. The operation aims to reposition or adjust the eye muscles, so they are properly aligned. It is important to note that each case of squint is unique, and the length of treatment will depend on the individual's specific needs.

Who will treat a squint?

- **Optometrist:** An optometrist is an eye care provider in the community who specialises in examining the eyes for vision problems, prescribing corrective lenses (glasses or contact lenses), and diagnosing and managing common eye conditions.
- **Ophthalmologist:** An ophthalmologist is a hospital doctor who is qualified to perform eye surgeries, prescribe medications, and provide comprehensive eye care, including treating complex eye conditions.
- **Orthoptist:** An orthoptist is a healthcare professional who specialises in diagnosing and managing eye movement disorders, such as squints (strabismus) and lazy eye (amblyopia). They often work closely with ophthalmologists and provide non-surgical treatments, including exercises and eye patches, to help improve eye coordination.

Living with a squint

Living with a squint can present some challenges, but with proper management, most individuals with a squint can overcome these. Regular eye check-ups, sticking to treatment plans, and open communication with your eye care specialist are all essential. Support from family and friends can also be beneficial in coping with any emotional and social aspects of having a squint.

An individual is unlikely to grow out of a squint that they have had since birth; however, the severity and frequency of the squint symptoms can improve as they get older. Remember, early diagnosis and appropriate treatment are crucial for managing the condition effectively. If you have any further questions or concerns, please don't hesitate to contact our clinic.

Contact us

If you have any questions, please ring 0118 322 7169

Monday to Friday between 8.30am and 4.30pm.

Orthoptic Department

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To find out more about our Trust visit www.royalberkshire.nhs.uk

Please ask if you need this information in another language or format.
