



Double vision (diplopia)

This leaflet explains what double vision is, what causes it and what treatment options are available.

What is double vision?

Double vision, also known as diplopia, is when a single object appears as two separate images. Double vision can appear in different orientations; it can be vertical, horizontal, or a combination of both.

There are two types of double vision:

- **Monocular double vision:** This occurs when each eye sees a separate image due to problems within one eye, such as a cataract. It persists even when one eye is closed.
- **Binocular double vision:** This arises from misalignment of the eyes due to problems with the muscles controlling eye movement or the nerves supplying those muscles. Binocular double vision typically disappears by closing either eye.

The orthoptists (experts in diagnosing and treating defects in eye movement) you will meet in this department specialise in diagnosing and treating binocular double vision, aiming to restore proper alignment and co-ordination between the eyes for improved vision and comfort.

If you experience monocular double vision, you will be referred to the appropriate specialists for further evaluation and investigation.

What causes binocular double vision?

- **Muscle imbalance:** When there is an imbalance in the muscles controlling eye movement.
- **Decompensation of muscle imbalance:** A well-controlled tendency for the eyes to deviate can worsen under certain conditions.
- **Weakness or damage to eye muscles or nerves** resulting from conditions such as:
 - Diabetes
 - Increased blood pressure
 - Thyroid problems

- Stroke
- Other neurological disorders

How is binocular double vision treated?

Treatment and management of double vision depend on its underlying cause. Some of the management and treatment options include:

- **Exercises:** Eye exercises may be recommended to strengthen eye muscles.
- **Prisms:** Temporary or permanent prism lenses can help redirect light entering the eyes, reducing the effects of misalignment, and alleviating double vision.
- **Patching:** Covering one eye with an eyepatch or covering one lens of glasses may help alleviate double vision in certain cases.
- **Surgery:** An operation may be necessary to correct severe muscle imbalance or misalignment that cannot be corrected with other treatments.
- **Botox injections:** In some cases, Botox injections may be used to temporarily paralyse specific eye muscles, helping to improve double vision.
- **Managing underlying conditions:** Such as diabetes or high blood pressure.

Can I drive with double vision?

It is important to note that driving with double vision is unsafe and **illegal**. However, if the double vision can be corrected with prism lenses or alleviated using an eye patch under the guidance of a healthcare professional, driving may be permitted. In such cases, it is mandatory to inform the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA) promptly.

For further information please visit: www.gov.uk/diplopia-and-driving.

Contact us

If you have any questions please ring 0118 322 7681 or 7683

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.