

## Squint repair (children)

### What is a squint?

A squint is a condition where the eyes point in different directions. Many squints are detected during routine eye checks carried out at certain stages in your child's development. One eye may turn inwards, outwards, upwards or downwards, while the other eye looks forward. The medical name for a squint is **strabismus**.

Squints can also cause:

- Blurred vision.
- Double vision.
- Lazy eye (amblyopia). This is when the brain starts to ignore signals coming from the eye with the squint.

### Why do squints happen?

It is not always apparent what causes a squint. Some babies are born with a squint (congenital squint) and some develop it later (acquired squint). Acquired squints are often caused by the eye attempting to overcome a vision problem, such as short-sightedness or long-sightedness.

### How are squints treated?

Common treatments include glasses and eye exercises. If these treatments aren't successful, corrective surgery will probably be required. This involves moving the muscles that control the movement of the eye. This operation is carried out under a general anaesthetic and usually takes less than an hour to perform.

Risks from surgery are rare, although sometimes more than one operation will be needed. Please ask your ophthalmologist to discuss possible risks with you before the operation.

### How will my child feel after the operation?

It can take several weeks to fully recover from eye surgery. All children react differently to general anaesthetics. Some may be sleepy, others will be alert and playing straight away. Some children feel nauseous and sick.

The eye may feel uncomfortable and a little gritty, but any pain is usually controlled by giving paracetamol and/or ibuprofen for a few days after the operation. The stitches will take a few days to dissolve, and the eye will water and be more sensitive to light until this happens.

It is not unusual for the eye to be swollen on waking in the morning. The redness, swelling and discomfort will progressively decrease. Some children are anxious about opening their eye but

they must be encouraged to do so as soon as possible. Double vision may occur after the operation. This usually resolves after a week.

Your child will sometimes be prescribed eye drops to be used after the operation. Use of these drops decreases the chance of infection and inflammation, and will help to speed up the healing process.

## Going home

Your nurse will give you specific advice regarding your child, but general advice includes:

- Should your child develop a fever, offensive (sticky, smelly) discharge from the eye, or pain which is not controlled by painkillers, please see your GP or attend the Emergency Department (A&E).
- Your child may not feel like eating but please encourage fluids.
- Do not worry if your child feels sick or vomits once or twice after leaving hospital. The anaesthetic can cause this and it is not an uncommon side effect. If this occurs stop giving food for about an hour and try small amounts of water or diluted juice every 20 minutes, then try a light diet such as plain biscuits or toast. If your child continues to vomit, please call for advice or attend your GP or nearest Emergency Department.
- The stitches can take up to 6 weeks to dissolve and it may feel there is a bit of grit in the eye; try not to rub it.
- Avoid washing hair for a few days and try to avoid soap or shampoo getting into the affected eye.
- Your child should not play with sand or use face paints for 2 weeks after the operation.
- Your child should avoid playing sports for about 2 weeks. Avoid contact sports for a month. Swimming should be avoided for at least a month after the operation.
- If your child wore glasses before the operation, it is likely they will still need to wear them.

**An appointment will be arranged for you to attend the eye clinic within several weeks for a follow-up.**

## Further information

- **NHS Website for England** [www.nhs.uk/conditions/squint](http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/squint)

## Useful contact details

### **East and North Hertfordshire Teaching NHS Trust:**

- Website [www.enherts-tr.nhs.uk](http://www.enherts-tr.nhs.uk)
- Telephone 01438 314333

### **Bluebell Ward, Lister Hospital:**

- Telephone 01438 284008

### **Children's Day Surgery, Level 4, Lister Hospital:**

- Telephone 01438 285775

### **Children's Emergency Department, Lister Hospital:**

- Telephone 01438 284333

### **Urgent Care Centre, New QEII Hospital, Welwyn Garden City:**

- Telephone 01707 247549

### **Eye Casualty Department, Treatment Centre, Lister Hospital:**

- Telephone 01438 288117  
Monday to Friday, 9am - 7pm  
Saturday, 9am - 12 noon.

### **Ophthalmology Hub, Treatment Centre, Lister Hospital:**

- Telephone 01438 286222

## **Leaflet information**

**You can request this information in a different format or another language;  
please speak to your doctor or nurse.**

**Date of publication:** April 2015

**Version number:** 4

**Author:** F Barampouti

**Reference:** Children's Services

**Review Date:** October 2028

© East and North Hertfordshire Teaching NHS Trust  
[www.enherts-tr.nhs.uk](http://www.enherts-tr.nhs.uk)