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Strabismus

What is strabismus?

Strabismus (struh·BIZ·muhs), is a condition where the eyes are **not straight or do not line up with each other** (sometimes called “wandering eye” or “crossed eyes”). Each eye has six muscles that the brain controls to help your eyes move together. If you have strabismus, the eyes do not move together and an eye may turn in, out, up, or down all the time or sometimes, perhaps when tired or reading. Strabismus is usually diagnosed in children before the age of 4 years. Strabismus can also occur in adults (for example from strokes and trauma). Treating strabismus early gives your child a better chance to see clearly and use both eyes together. If strabismus is not treated, it can cause permanent vision loss in one eye (amblyopia) or poor depth perception.

What causes strabismus?

Strabismus can be caused by:

- Problems with the eye muscles that control eye movement
- Nerve problems that affect how the brain controls the eye muscles
- Part of the brain that controls eye movements and eye alignment
- Other health conditions or eye injuries

What are the risk factors for strabismus?

- **Family history:** If parents or siblings have strabismus, a child is more likely to have it.
- **Refractive error:** Children who are very farsighted (hyperopia) have trouble seeing up close.
- **Medical conditions:** Children with conditions such as Down syndrome and cerebral palsy or who have experienced a stroke or head injury are at a higher risk for developing strabismus.

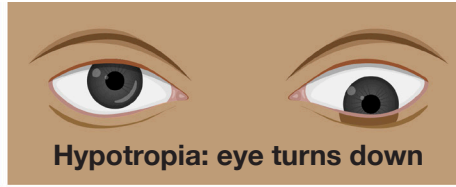


**Helping your child
see clearly — because
every dream deserves
healthy vision!**

Strabismus (continued)

What are the types of strabismus?

Strabismus is described by the way the eye turns, how often it turns, and which eye turns. It can occur all the time (constant) or sometimes (intermittent).



The two most common types of strabismus are:

Accommodative esotropia happens when a child is farsighted and tries to focus on things up close. This can make their eyes cross inward.

Intermittent exotropia is when one eye sometimes drifts outward, especially when the child is tired, daydreaming, or looking far away.

What are the signs of strabismus?

When your child is young, they often do not realize they have a vision problem. You can help them by keeping these signs in mind:



Squinting



Closing one eye to look at something



Tilting head to look at something



Problems with depth perception
(judging how far away things are)



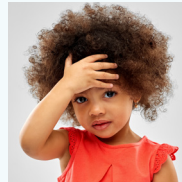
Bumping into objects



Difficulty learning to read



Blurred or double vision

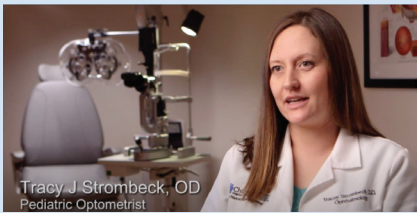


Headaches

How is strabismus diagnosed?

Vision Screenings and Eye Exams

Vision screenings are performed in schools, daycare centers, pediatric primary care offices, Head Start, and other community settings. They identify children at risk for vision problems and refer them to receive an eye exam conducted by an eye doctor (optometrist or ophthalmologist). Only an **eye doctor** can diagnose and treat a vision problem. **Note, vision screenings do not replace an eye exam performed by an eye doctor.**



Watch this video to prepare you for your child's eye exam

Preparing for the eye doctor appointment:

- Schedule your child's eye exam for a time that will not conflict with naps or meals
- Bring a list of questions for the eye doctor
- Bring snacks and a quiet favorite toy to the appointment to ensure young children remain comfortable
- Show your children videos or books with illustrations where you can explain what happens at an eye doctor appointment
- Make fun plans for after the appointment

Questions to ask your doctor

- How well does my child see?
- Why does my child's eye sometimes look in different directions?
- Does my child have any other vision problems like lazy eye (amblyopia)?
- What treatment do you recommend?
- How soon should we start treatment?
- Will glasses help?
- Do we need to use an eye patch?
- Could my child need eye muscle surgery?
- Are there any eye exercises we can do at home?
- Can my child still play sports or go to school with strabismus?
- Will this affect my child's reading or learning?
- How can I talk to my child's teacher and classmates about my child's strabismus, so they understand what is going on with my child's eyes?

How is strabismus treated and how can you explain it to your child?

Note: Follow-up visits are important, and treatment may last several years as the child grows.

Treatment	How to explain to your child
Eyeglasses or Contact Lenses: Glasses or contacts help your child's eyes see clearly and work better together.	"These glasses are here to help your eyes relax and see better."
Prism Lenses: These special lenses bend light to help your child see one clear image instead of two.	"These special lenses help you see one toy or one face instead of seeing two."
Patching: Wearing a patch on the strong eye helps the weaker eye get stronger.	"This patch helps your sleepy eye wake up and become super strong!"
Eye Exercises: Eye exercises are like workouts that make the eye muscles stronger and better at staying straight to improve eye coordination and focusing skills.	"Let's do some fun eye exercises together."
Eye Muscle Surgery: A doctor can do a small surgery to move the eye muscles so both eyes point the same way.	"The doctor will give your eyes a special treatment so they can work better together — like best friends."



Learn more about strabismus
PreventBlindness.org/Strabismus