

Eye Unit – Orthoptic Department

Patching – Help and Advice for Parents and Guardians

As your child has amblyopia (a lazy eye) they need to wear an eye patch. The patch goes over the better eye in order to stimulate the weaker eye and improve the vision.

The length of time this treatment will take will vary with each individual and will have been discussed with you at your consultation.

At times occlusion (patching) treatment can be difficult and often requires patience and perseverance. We have therefore put together a list of tips and advice to help you along the way.

If you have any other ideas or strategies that have worked for you and might help others, please let us know.

- It is important that you, and your child if they are old enough, understand exactly why an eye patch has to be worn. This will be explained to you by your Orthoptist. It is a good idea to explain to all family members, friends, teachers and carers why an eye patch has to be worn. Then everyone can work together to offer support for your child.
- As your child's level of vision is reduced when they are wearing their patch, they might require help to do things that they are used to being able to do on their own. Children need time to adjust to a new situation and therefore it is important to give your child reassurance. To help you understand what your child is experiencing, try covering one of your own eyes. You will notice that some of your peripheral vision or visual field of the side that is covered is



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lost. This can make some tasks difficult and your child may become frustrated.



- It is not essential to provide anything extra special for your child in order for them to adjust to the new situation but familiarity at home can be important. In the beginning try positioning toys and books nearer to the side of the uncovered eye to help stop your child becoming frustrated with the lack of all round vision. They will soon adapt and learn to move their head to find and follow objects that are initially out of sight. If you are out and about walk on the same side of your child as the eye that is covered to help them feel more secure.
- Co-ordination can be difficult at first as the brain adjusts to using the weaker eye. Easy activities will help to boost your child's confidence. Engage in activities that require good hand to eye co-ordination such as drawing, painting, cutting and sticking or playing with small toys.
- Throwing a ball into a bucket or playing catch will be a more challenging game as your child's perception of depth and distance may be altered and therefore concentration is required.
- Children like to copy so if your child has a favourite doll, teddy bear or favourite character, apply an eye patch to the toy. (This will help your child to share the experience and also shows the child that it is not painful).
- Reading and writing requires close visual attention so encourage your child to do this whilst wearing their patch. If they are too young to read the words, looking closely at the pictures will work too.

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- It is vital to distract your child from trying to remove their patch and/or glasses. Try and make wearing an eye patch fun and keep your child occupied. Children who are busy playing are more likely to leave their eye patch alone.
- To encourage your child to keep their eye patch in place, design a chart with them. You can draw smiley faces when the patch has been worn well or even use stickers. Setting your child goals or tasks to do whilst wearing their patch can also be recorded on the chart.
- Use a reward system and praise your child when they are wearing their patch well. Regular small rewards can be given or you can accumulate all the good days to a final reward at the end. This gives your child an incentive and something to look forward to.
- Some children prefer to wear their eye patch at home whereas others prefer to wear it at school. If your child is at nursery or school they will be engaged in planned and structured activities. If wearing the patch at home try and organise their time in a similar way.
- Some children prefer to wear their eye patch for the time requested all in one go and other prefer to split it and do some in the morning and some in the afternoon. Either is acceptable so try whatever fits in best with your daily routine.
- If your child is becoming fed up with the patch before it has been worn for long enough then consider using a timer or a clock so your child is able to see the progress of time.
- Make sure your child is comfortable with the patch they are wearing. Eye patches come in many different designs, plain and patterned, sticky and fabric. If you choose plain patches your child can design their own pictures for them or put a sticker on them. Speak to your Orthoptist about what is available.
- Remain positive and provide motivation, support and reassurance for your child. At the end of each patching session give positive praise for effort and achievement.

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- Remember you are not alone. Your Orthoptist is always available to provide support and you can also have help from the play staff who work at University Hospital.

If you wish to contact the Orthoptic Department please telephone:

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The Trust has access to interpreting and translation services. If you need this information in another language or format please contact 024 7696 6521 and we will do our best to meet your needs.

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