

What is a Squint?

Your Orthoptist is available to answer any further questions about childhood squints, and relate specifically to your case as required.

A Squint affects the positioning of the eyes, and often prevents both eyes working together as a pair.

Types of Squints

Not all squints are the same. Squints may be **constant**, they may be there all the time, or they can be **intermittent**.

A squinting eye may turn inwards towards the nose, or turn outwards. Some can also turn up or downwards. It is often the case that squints worsen if the child feels particularly tired or unwell.

Squints are usually present in just one eye at a time, although they may sometimes swap between the two eyes.

What can cause a squint?

In some cases there may be no obvious reason for a squint. However, often a squint is due to a variety of reasons such as:

Congenital

A congenital squint means a child has been born with a squint.

Need for Glasses

Some children may be long-sighted and need glasses. The child over focuses to see clearly without the glasses and the effort required doing this can lead to one eye turning/squinting.

Children can also be short sighted, which occasionally leads to a squint.

Family History

A family history of squint or glasses has been found to increase the risk of childhood squints.

Associated Health Conditions

Some health conditions (such as prematurity, Down's syndrome, trauma) may make it more likely that your child will develop a squint.

Treatment

As not all squints are the same, treatment will vary from case to case, and your Orthoptist will keep you informed. The majority of cases require a combination of the following:

Glasses

A glasses test will be performed by the hospital **Optometrist**. To

achieve the most accurate results, eye drops are used at this appointment. If a need for glasses is found, these are given for full time wear to improve the child's eyesight. Glasses may also improve the position of the eyes, and correct or improve the squint. (Although this will only happen when the glasses are being worn).

Some squints are not affected by glasses, and **not all children with a squint will require glasses.**

Where glasses are given to improve a child's eyesight, full time wear is advised.

Patching or Eye Drops

Amblyopia (a lazy eye) may develop because of a squint. Because the two eyes are not working together as a pair, the brain often ignores what the squinting eye sees. This causes unequal development and the vision may drop in the eye that turns. To treat the amblyopic eye, an eye patch or eye drops are used to prevent the use of the straight, 'good eye' to make the lazy eye work to improve the vision.

Remember: Patching will not improve the position of the squinting eye, just the vision.

Surgery

Some squints may be suitable for an operation to improve the position of the eyes. This is performed by the hospital **Ophthalmologist** if required.

Remember: Surgery will not improve the vision, just the position of the squinting eye.

Sometimes no active treatment is required, although you will be reviewed regularly in the hospital by your Orthoptist.

Contact details

 TorbayAndSouthDevonFT

 @TorbaySDevonNHS

www.torbayandsouthdevon.nhs.uk

Pseudo-Squint

You may have been told that your child does not have a squint, despite your concerns that you see a turn in their eyes.

Some babies and young children can appear to have a squint, although in fact their eyes are working together as a pair. This is known as a pseudo-squint, and is usually due to excess skin over the bridge of the nose (called the epicanthus) covering the inner part of the eyes and giving them an unequal appearance. This is likely to improve as the child gets older, as the bridge of the nose will grow. The Orthoptist will want to perform some tests to ensure the vision in either eye is developing equally, and prove that the two eyes are working binocularly (as a pair). It may take more than one appointment to confidently prove this.

For further assistance or to receive this information in a different format, please contact the department which created this leaflet.

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Torbay and South Devon
NHS Foundation Trust

PATIENT INFORMATION

Squint (Strabismus)

Orthoptic Department

Working with you, for you