

August Awareness 2013

Amblyopia, also known as “lazy eye” is the loss of ability of one eye to see details. It is the most common cause of vision problems in children. 2-3% of children are affected by amblyopia, which occurs when the brain’s connection to the eye does not develop correctly, causing the brain to favor one eye. The central vision is reduced, whereas the peripheral vision is usually unaffected in the affected eye.

There are two common types of amblyopia. Anisometropic is when the vision in one eye differs significantly from the other, usually caused by a large difference in prescription. Also the most common of the two. The other form is strabismic, which is a visible misalignment of the eye, making the patient look cross eyed or like one eye is wandering to the side. The visual pathway also doesn’t develop correctly during childhood in the turned eye, thus reducing the vision in that eye.

Some symptoms include; eye turning in or out, blurred or poor vision in one eye, the eyes not working together, headaches, the inability to correctly judge depth, and poor reading skills. Having a droopy eyelid, or excessive squinting are also symptoms. It is important to have routine eye exams starting at 6 months old, then 3 years old and every year before school. Routine eye exams early on help prevent amblyopia with appropriate treatment. Amblyopic treatment options include eye glasses, prisms, vision therapy and/or patching. The treatments are unique to the individual and depend on the discretion of the optometrist.