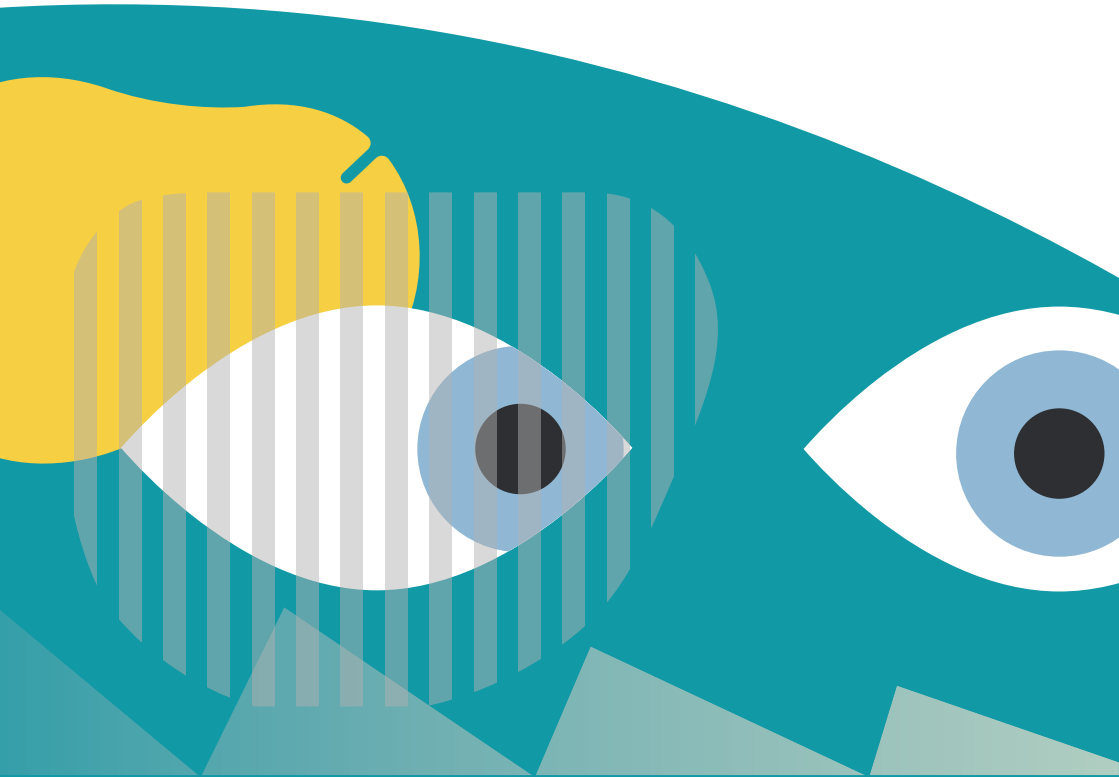
Short guides

BIOS

British and Irish Orthoptic Society

# Strabismus (Squint)

A short guide for patients and carers



# This leaflet answers common questions about strabismus (or squint), what it is and how it is treated.

**What is a strabismus?**

Strabismus, often referred to as a squint, occurs when an eye turns and stops working with the other eye. The eye may turn towards the nose or turn outwards, upwards or downwards.

**What causes strabismus?**

In many cases, strabismus is caused by longsightedness and the child needs glasses. The strain made by the child to see without glasses causes the eye to turn in. In other cases there may be no obvious reason but there is usually a history of glasses and/or strabismus in the family.

**Will my child grow out of a squint?**

No - although some strabismus may improve as the child gets older.

## Will my child need treatment?

Vision development will be prioritised, with glasses and any patching necessary given in early childhood. Some strabismus improve with improved vision alone, whilst others may need surgery to straighten the eyes.

## Is all strabismus treated the same?

No, there are many different types of strabismus and therefore many choices of treatment. No two cases of strabismus should be compared.

## Who will treat my child's eyes?

There may be up to three people who look after your child's eyes.

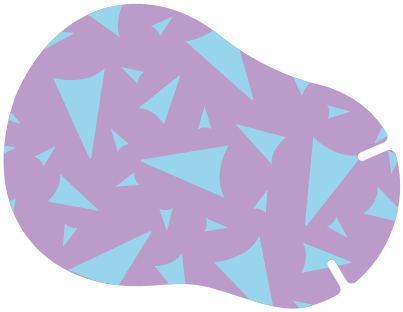
- The **ophthalmologist** (eye surgeon) will be responsible for your child's general eye care and will carry out any surgery necessary, and may prescribe glasses.
- The **orthoptist** (a specialist in the treatment of strabismus and children's eye development) will monitor the development of sight and will advise you of any patching your child needs. The orthoptist may also advise on any exercises needed to help control the strabismus, and works closely with the ophthalmologist.
- The **optometrist** will check the health of the back of the eye and test your child's need for glasses and issue a prescription.

## How long does treatment take?

This varies from patient to patient. Often, earlier intervention has better outcomes.

## How do I find out about my child's eye condition?

Ask any of the eyecare professionals dealing with your child's eyes. Every case is different and it is easier for them to answer any specific questions you may have.



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