

Children's ophthalmology

Children's eye care service

Information for patients, relatives and carers

Introduction

The children's ophthalmology staff are here to help children referred for reduced vision, squint (strabismus), 'lazy eye'/reduced vision (amblyopia), glasses prescriptions and other eye problems. Referrals may come from local opticians, GPs, school nurses and health visitors.

Why test children's eyes?

Children's eyes develop from the age of 0-8 years and we aim to try and help improve opportunities for achieving at school, to drive a car and have a wide choice of employment opportunities open to them later on in life, before the vision has settled into maturity and can no longer be helped.

Children often don't know what 'good vision' looks like and don't tell their carers they have a problem seeing things. The range of tests developed to test children's eyes will help us find out if there are any problems

Common eye problems in children

Approximately 4 per cent of children have strabismus ('squint' – where an eye turns in or out) and 8 per cent of children under 8 years old need glasses. Children with conditions such as diabetes, arthritis etc. also need hospital appointments to monitor their eye health.

Your visit to the children's eye department

The children's ophthalmology clinic is situated on the 6th floor, of the Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother building at St Mary's Hospital, within the children's outpatient department. As you may need to see more than 1 clinician and have eye drops, which need some time to work, you may want to bring food, drinks, books/toys and entertainment with headphones.

Please also:

- bring some sunglasses for your child, particularly if it is bright weather
- make sure you reassure/praise your child as they see each clinician
- try and find out information about other family members who have eye conditions as this will help us in diagnosing any inherited sight problems

Who will my child see?

Your child will see a range of medical staff to ensure we have carried out a thorough investigation into your child's eye health. They may see 1 or more of the following clinicians:

- Orthoptist – an eye clinician who assesses the level of vision, the alignment of the eyes (possible squint) and the '3D vision'. The orthoptist may prescribe a course of patching of 1 eye to improve the vision of the unpatched eye, due to a 'lazy eye' (amblyopia). The orthoptist may also put dilating drops in to your child's eye, which can take up to 1 hour to act and may take up to 24 hours to fully wear off. The drops cause blurred near vision and light sensitivity
- Children's optometrist – this is a clinician experienced in prescribing children's glasses and checking the health of the inside of the eyes. The optometrist will issue a prescription and a voucher for 1 pair of glasses, if needed. This can be used at any optician but please make sure the practice has a good range of children's frames
- Children's ophthalmologist – a doctor specialising in children's eye health and complex eye problems which may need treatment and/or surgery. The ophthalmologist can also register and issue a certificate for children with visual impairment (CVI form) to help raise awareness of their condition in school etc.

What happens on the day of my appointment?

You will check in at reception and a nurse will direct you to the waiting area for your first specialist clinician. Toilets and baby changing facilities are opposite reception.

Your child will be seen by the orthoptist to assess the vision and alignment of the eyes. Following this, drops may be given and you will be asked to wait in the waiting area for the drops to take effect.

Your child may be seen by the optometrist and/or doctor.

How long will the appointment take?

As you may have to see various members of the children's ophthalmology team and wait for the eye drops to fully work, please allow up to 3 hours for the appointment. Please plan your parking, snacks and drinks before you attend the clinic.

Will I need to visit the hospital again?

The last clinician your child sees on your first visit will let you know the outcome of the appointment and advise on any follow-up appointments needed. A letter will be sent out to you with the details of the next appointment and you may also receive a text message confirmation. Please ensure your contact details are correct before you leave the department. The time between appointments will depend on your child's eye condition and treatment plan.

In certain cases, an appointment at the Western Eye hospital may be needed if your child needs to have specific diagnostic tests.

Who can I contact for more information?

St Mary's Hospital

Children's outpatients: Telephone **020 3312 7683** (08.30 – 16.30 Monday to Friday, except public holidays).

Western eye hospital

Orthoptic department: Telephone **020 3312 3256** (08.30 – 16.30 Monday to Friday, except public holidays).

How do I make a comment about my visit?

We aim to provide the best possible service and staff will be happy to answer any of the questions you may have. If you have any **suggestions** or **comments** about your visit, please either speak to a member of staff or contact the patient advice and liaison service (**PALS**) on **020 3312 7777** (10.00 – 16.00, Monday to Friday). You can also email PALS at imperial.pals@nhs.net The PALS team will listen to your concerns, suggestions or queries and is often able to help solve problems on your behalf.

Alternatively, you may wish to complain by contacting our complaints department:

Complaints department, fourth floor, Salton House, St Mary's Hospital, Praed Street
London W2 1NY

Email: ICHC-tr.Complaints@nhs.net

Telephone: **020 3312 1337 / 1349**

Alternative formats

This leaflet can be provided on request in large print or easy read, as a sound recording, in Braille or in alternative languages. Please email the communications team: imperial.communications@nhs.net

Wi-fi

Wi-fi is available at our Trust. For more information visit our website: www.imperial.nhs.uk

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