

Ophthalmology department

Double vision

Information for patients, relatives and carers

Introduction

This leaflet has been designed to give you information about **double vision** and answer some of the questions that you or those who care for you may have. It is not meant to replace the discussion between you and your medical team but aims to help you understand more about what is discussed. If you have any questions about the information below, please contact us

What is double vision?

Double vision, the common name for diplopia, is seeing two images of the same object instead of one for some or all of the time. The two images may be vertically separated (one on top of the other), horizontally separated (side by side) or a combination of both.

Although we see with two eyes, we normally have single vision, meaning we see only one image of an object. This is because our brain can normally control the muscles that move each eye so that both are pointing accurately at the object being looked at. When each eye produces its own image, the brain then joins them together into one. This gives us what is called binocular single vision.

Causes of double vision

Binocular double vision occurs when eyes are no longer able to work together as a pair because some of the muscles or nerves that control the eyes are weak or damaged. This may happen suddenly or over a period of time. This type of double vision will stop if either eye is covered.

This weakness or damage can be caused by a number of conditions. Investigations may be required in order to determine the cause of the double vision such as:

- an up-to-date glasses test with your optician
- blood tests and other tests to check the circulation and neurological system
- an ophthalmic examination in a specialist eye clinic may be needed to try and find out the cause of double vision

Treatment

Treatment for double vision will depend on the cause. If the double vision is present most of the time, it may be possible to use a prism lens (a special transparent plastic sheet) fitted onto spectacles to join the images. These can be added to your current glasses if you have them.

It may be necessary to cover one eye in order to block out one of the double images, at least temporarily.

Eye Patching

You may cover one of your eyes to relieve the diplopia initially.

You may use a fabric eye patch that you can wear over your head. If you already wear glasses you may cover up one of your lenses with a frosted foil to block out the double image.

Covering up one eye will not make your condition worsen, and it does not normally matter which eye you choose to cover up. You may choose this for yourself based on comfort. You can wear an eye patch as often as you like; it will not affect any potential recovery.

People with double vision should avoid driving or operating machinery, at least until they have adapted to wearing a prism or patch over one eye. It is not normally legal to drive with constant double vision. Further guidance should be sought from the DVLA.

Next steps

Double vision may gradually get better with time. If full recovery does not occur, prisms can be incorporated into a spectacle correction, sometimes injections into the eye muscles or surgery on the eye muscles may be considered. We will normally ask your GP or hospital consultant to refer you to your local eye clinic for further treatment for your condition.

Further information can also be found at:

- The British and Irish Orthoptic Society www.orthoptics.org.uk/patients-and-public/
- www.nhs.uk/conditions/double-vision/

Who can I contact for more information?

- The Orthoptic Department – 020 3312 3256 ichc-tr.orthoptics@nhs.net
- Emergency Department at Western Eye Hospital – 020 3312 3245

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 3313 0088** (Charing Cross, Hammersmith and Queen Charlotte's & Chelsea hospitals), or **020 3312 7777** (St Mary's and Western Eye hospitals). 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

Department of ophthalmology

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