



Fact sheet: Strabismus

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What is strabismus?

Strabismus, commonly known as 'turned' or 'lazy' eye, is a nerve disorder that causes the eyes to point in different directions.

How common is strabismus?

Strabismus is the most common eye disorder in children. It's estimated that between 3 and 5 per cent of the Australian population is affected by strabismus.

What causes strabismus?

The causes of strabismus are varied. The condition can be caused by abnormalities in the eye muscles or within the nerves that control these muscles. Strabismus can also occur in people with low vision. In some cases, strabismus can be a sign of a more serious eye disease but this is not common. Strabismus in children should be promptly investigated.

How is strabismus detected?

Strabismus can be difficult to detect, particularly in children. It's recommended that all children undergo an eye test before starting school. Children who experience changes to their vision or the appearance of their eyes should undergo a thorough examination.

Can strabismus cause low vision?

When the eyes point in different directions, the brain receives two different visual images. When this occurs, the brain relies on the straight or 'good' eye for visual information and ignores the turned eye. This leads to amblyopia, or 'lazy eye'. Children who develop amblyopia may experience vision problems. Over a person's lifetime amblyopia can lead to a greater risk of blindness as accidents or other diseases can affect their one remaining good eye.

Who develops strabismus?

There are many different types and causes of strabismus. Risk factors include a family history of the condition, long-sightedness and low vision. Adults with no history of strabismus can also develop the condition and should seek prompt medical attention if they do.

How is strabismus treated?

Vision problems caused by strabismus can be prevented if treated early. Strabismus treatment aims to improve the alignment of the eyes. This is often achieved through glasses, surgery or both. An eye patch may be used to improve vision loss caused by amblyopia. Untreated childhood strabismus will persist into adulthood.

What research is CERA conducting into strabismus?

Researchers at CERA contributed to the discovery of a gene linked to a rare and complex form of strabismus. This collaborative research with Children's Hospital Boston is now being expanded to investigate the genes associated with the common forms of childhood strabismus. It is hoped this research will lead to new treatments and ways to prevent the condition.

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