

Microtropia

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What is a microtropia?

A squint occurs if the eyes cannot work together as a binocular pair at all times; one or both eyes can be seen to drift inwards or outwards dependent on the type of squint. Squints can be large and very noticeable or very small.

A microtropia is a very small squint – defined as measuring less than twenty degrees. In microtropias, the eye usually turns very slightly inward (towards the nose) or in some rarer cases very slightly outwards (away from the nose). A person with a microtropia is usually unaware they have it.

What causes a microtropia?

In most cases it is a congenital condition, meaning it is present at birth. In some patients a microtropia may occur as a result of treatment of larger squints, i.e. after surgery to correct a squint or a squint controlled with glasses.

What are the symptoms?

People with a microtropia will often have slightly reduced vision in the affected eye. The unaffected eye will have normal vision. Normally the difference is between one to two lines of letters on the vision chart. This happens because the light entering the eye lands slightly away from the fovea (the most sensitive part of the retina) and onto a less sensitive part of the retina. Patients with a microtropia will have a reduced ability to see in depth (3D vision) than people without the condition, however this does not usually affect them in everyday life.

How is it diagnosed?

A microtropia is very small and it can't usually be seen just by looking at a person. Tests done by your orthoptist during an orthoptic assessment will determine if a microtropia is present.

How is it treated?

In many cases no treatment is needed. However if vision in the affected eye is significantly reduced, then occlusion therapy (wearing a patch over the stronger eye to improve the vision in the weaker eye) may be prescribed. Your orthoptist will discuss this with you if they think it is necessary. Even after a successful regime of occlusion therapy, people with microtropia are likely to always have some difference in the level of vision between the two eyes.

Are there any possible complications?

People with microtropia often have **anisometropia**. This means the refractive error (amount of long or short-sightedness or astigmatism (rugby ball shaped eye)) is different in one eye compared to the other. If your orthoptist suspects a diagnosis of microtropia, they will arrange for a refraction (glasses check) to be performed. If significant anisometropia is found, it will be corrected with glasses.

Follow up

You will have regular check-ups until your orthoptist is satisfied vision in the affected eye is stable and not at risk of getting worse. Usually a microtropia remains stable, however in some cases, the microtropia can 'decompensate', meaning it can increase in size and become noticeable. This can result in symptoms such as double vision in older children and adults and deteriorating vision in younger children. If you feel your/your child's microtropia has changed, please contact the orthoptic department without delay.

Further information

If you have any questions, please contact the Orthoptic Department on **01271 322469**.

Useful websites:

British and Irish Orthoptic Society - www.orthoptics.org.uk

Squint Clinic - www.squintclinic.com

PALS

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