

Double Vision

What is double vision?

Double vision (diplopia) is being aware of two images when you know there should only be one. The images can appear to be side by side (horizontally displaced), one above the other (vertically displaced), one image tilted (torsional displacement) or a combination of these.

Diplopia can be **monocular**, present with only one eye open or **binocular**, present with both eyes open but disappearing when either eye is closed.

The management of binocular double vision is carried out by the orthoptic department. When attending your orthoptic appointment please ensure you bring your most recent glasses with you, both readers and distance glasses.

What causes binocular double vision?

Attached to the outside of each eye there are six muscles that move the eyes in different directions. If one or more of these muscles, or the nerve supply to the muscles, is damaged double vision can result. You may be aware that the double vision is worse in certain directions or distances.

Certain conditions and diseases can cause double vision, as can injury to the head or the eye.

Treatment of binocular diplopia

Double vision can be temporarily relieved by covering or closing one eye or by adjustment of the head position.

Diplopia may be joined by applying a plastic (Fresnel) prism to the lens of the glasses. If you do not normally wear glasses we can provide you with a temporary pair of plain lens glasses. Prisms do not cure the double vision but relieve the symptoms and make you feel more comfortable. If the double vision improves over time the strength of prism can be reduced then hopefully removed. The length of time taken for the double vision to improve varies greatly from person to person and it may not completely resolve. In this case a permanent prism may be needed, if so you can continue with a plastic prism or it may be possible to build the prism into your spectacle lenses.

For some people it is not possible to use a prism, this may be because the images are too widely separated or because the double vision is very variable. In this case we can relieve your symptoms by covering (occluding) one lens of your glasses or using an eye patch; the Orthoptist will discuss the best choice of occlusion for you.

If the double vision does not resolve completely and a permanent prism or occlusion is not appropriate surgical intervention may be considered.

What causes monocular double vision?

There are numerous causes of monocular diplopia. These include cataract and an incorrect glasses prescription.

Treatment of monocular double vision

Treatment will vary depending on the cause but this type of diplopia cannot be joined by using prisms.

You may need a repeat eye test with your Optometrist (Optician) or be referred to the Ophthalmologist.

For further information

- www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk

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