LONDON BOROUGH OF HARROW

Children's Sensory Team (CST)

Parent Information Sheet:

Occlusion Therapy (Patching) for Amblyopia (Lazy Eye)

What is Occlusion Therapy?

Occlusion therapy, often called **patching**, is a treatment used to improve vision in a weaker eye. It is commonly prescribed for children with:

- **Amblyopia (lazy eye)** - when one eye does not develop normal vision.
- **Strabismus (squint)** - when the eyes do not look in the same direction.

The treatment works by covering the stronger eye with a patch, encouraging the weaker eye to work harder and helping the brain learn to use that eye more effectively.

Why Does My Child Need a Patch?

Your child's orthoptist has identified that one eye is seeing less clearly than the other.

This may be because your child:

- Has a squint (strabismus)
- Needs glasses
- Has both a squint and a need for glasses

Without treatment, the weaker eye may not develop its full visual potential.

How Does Patching Help?

When the stronger eye is covered:

- The weaker eye must do all the seeing.
- The brain is encouraged to pay more attention to signals from the weaker eye.
- Vision in the weaker eye can gradually improve over time.

Patching is usually most effective for children under 7 to 8 years old, although older children may also benefit.

How Should My Child Wear the Patch?

Adhesive Patch

- Place the patch directly onto the skin over the stronger eye.
- If your child wears glasses, they should continue wearing them over the patch.

Fabric Patch

Some children may use a cloth patch that fits over their glasses. Your orthoptist will advise which type is most suitable.

How Long Should My Child Wear the Patch Each Day?

The amount of patching required depends on:

- Your child's age
- How reduced the vision is in the weaker eye

Most children wear their patch for:

- Around **2 hours per day**

Some children with poorer vision may need:

- Up to **6 hours per day**

Your orthoptist will agree a patching plan that fits your family's routine.

Patching time can often be:

- Split into shorter sessions
- Increased at weekends
- Carried out during school hours if appropriate

Please inform your child's school and discuss any support they may need.

How Long Will Treatment Last?

Every child is different.

Treatment may continue for:

- Several months
- One or more years

Your child will usually be reviewed every **6 to 12 weeks**.

The aim is for both eyes to achieve similar levels of vision.

Once vision becomes stable, patching time will gradually be reduced.

Important

Do not stop patching unless advised by your orthoptist.

Stopping too early may allow vision in the weaker eye to deteriorate again, and treatment may need to restart.

What Might My Child Experience?

Initially, your child may:

- Be reluctant to wear the patch
- Feel frustrated
- Notice that seeing is more difficult while patched

This is normal and generally improves as vision develops.

Safety Tips

While wearing the patch your child may need:

- Extra supervision when crossing roads
- Help during outdoor play
- To sit nearer the whiteboard at school
- To sit closer to the television
- Additional time to complete some tasks

Skin Care

Occasionally patches can cause:

- Redness
- Skin soreness
- A rash

If this happens:

1. Stop using the patch.
2. Contact your orthoptist for advice.

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Will the Vision Improve Without Patching?

Unfortunately, amblyopia does not usually improve on its own.

Without treatment, reduced vision may become permanent and may not be recoverable later in life.

Early treatment gives the best opportunity for improvement.

How Can I Help My Child Succeed?

Parental support is one of the most important factors in successful treatment.

Helpful Strategies

- Stay positive and encouraging
- Introduce patching gradually if needed
- Praise your child's efforts
- Use reward charts or stickers
- Attend all follow-up appointments
- Build patching into your daily routine

Encourage Close-Up Activities While Patched

Activities that help the weaker eye work include:

- Colouring
- Drawing
- Reading
- Jigsaw puzzles
- Lego and construction toys
- Crafts
- Word searches
- Computer or tablet games
- Homework activities

When Should I Seek Advice?

Contact your orthoptist if:

- Your child refuses to wear the patch despite support and encouragement.
- The patch causes skin irritation.
- The patch becomes difficult to manage.
- You have concerns about your child's vision.
- You are unsure about the patching schedule.

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Key Messages to Remember

✓ Patching is an effective treatment for amblyopia.
✓ Consistent patching is essential for success.
✓ Glasses should be worn if prescribed.
✓ Follow the plan agreed with your orthoptist.
✓ Attend all review appointments.
✓ Encourage close-up activities while your child is wearing the patch.
✓ Improvements can take time, so patience and persistence are important.

Need Further Advice?

If you have questions about your child's treatment, please contact your **Orthoptist** or the **Children's Sensory Team (CST)** for support and guidance.

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