

Strabismus (crossed eyes)

What is strabismus?

Strabismus, more commonly known as crossed-eyes, is a vision condition in which your eyes are not properly aligned with each other. For a variety of reasons, one or both of your eyes turn in, out, up or down.

What causes strabismus?

Coordination of your eyes and their ability to work together as a team develops in your first six years. Failure of your eyes (or more precisely, your eye muscles) to adjust properly can lead to crossed-eyes. Strabismus may also have a tendency to be hereditary.

Who is affected by strabismus?

Children under 6 are the ones most affected by crossed-eyes, but this often first appears between birth and age 21 months. It is estimated that five percent of all children have some type or degree of strabismus. Although rare, strabismus sometimes begins in adulthood, but this is usually the result of a stroke, tumor or other vascular disease.

Will a child outgrow strabismus?

This is a common misconception. A child will not outgrow crossed-eyes. In fact, the condition may get worse without treatment.

What are the effects of strabismus?

Children with strabismus may initially have double vision. This occurs because both eyes are not focusing on the same object. In an attempt to avoid double vision, the brain will eventually disregard the image from one eye. In time, the ignored eye will become unable to function normally and will become largely unused. This may result in the development of lazy eye (amblyopia).

How is strabismus diagnosed?

Parents may be the first to notice a slight wandering of one or both of a child's eyes. A comprehensive vision examination by a Doctor of Optometry is recommended by the age of three, as parents often will not notice it. The examination can determine if strabismus is present.

How is strabismus treated?

Treatment for strabismus can include eyeglasses (regular or bifocal), prisms, vision therapy, and in some cases, surgery. Strabismus can be corrected with excellent results if detected and treated early.