

Nystagmus

This material will help you understand nystagmus and how it is treated.

What is nystagmus?

Nystagmus is described as involuntary eye movements. Usually both eyes move from side to side. Sometimes only one eye is affected or the movements are vertical or circular. These movements can be quick or slow and may vary with the direction of your child's gaze.

How does nystagmus affect my child's eyesight?

Even though the eyes appear to be shaking, children with nystagmus usually see a steady image. To help clear the image, your child may adopt a head position where the movements are less severe.

What causes nystagmus?

Eye movements are controlled by the brain. Abnormal movements can result from a variety of causes. In congenital nystagmus the movements are present from an early age and children may not have any other associated conditions. Other causes of nystagmus include lesions affecting the brain such as tumors or strokes, as well as medications and certain infections. Sometimes the cause of nystagmus remains unclear even after a thorough examination.

How is nystagmus treated?

Treatment varies with the cause of nystagmus. In some cases, glasses can help make the eye movements less severe and improve vision. In other cases, eye muscle surgery may be required to improve an uncomfortable head position.

What will my child's eyesight be like when he/she is an adult?

Visual acuity in children with nystagmus can range from very good (20/20) to poor (less than 20/400). It is difficult to accurately predict the final visual acuity of any child when they are first diagnosed.

For more information, scan this code with your smartphone or visit the website listed.



<http://www.aapos.org/terms/conditions/80>

Disclaimer: This document contains information and/or instructional materials developed by the University of Michigan Health System (UMHS) for the typical patient with your condition. It may include links to online content that was not created by UMHS and for which UMHS does not assume responsibility. It does not replace medical advice from your health care provider because your experience may differ from that of the typical patient. Talk to your health care provider if you have any questions about this document, your condition or your treatment plan.

Author: Kristin Maurer, BA, MPH candidate
Reviewers: Marina Eisenberg, MD and Gale Oren, MILS

Unless otherwise noted, Patient Education by [University of Michigan Health System](#) is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 3.0 Unported License](#).

Last Revised 4/2015