



Patient Information – Intermittent exotropia

This leaflet aims to answer some of the questions you may have about squint intermittent exotropia. The leaflet does not cover everything, as every patient and every squint is different. Miss West will discuss your particular case with you. Please ask the clinical staff about anything you do not understand.

What is intermittent exotropia?

Intermittent exotropia is a common eye condition in children where one eye occasionally drifts outward, particularly when tired, daydreaming, or focusing on distant objects. While many cases remain stable, regular monitoring ensures timely intervention if needed.

Symptoms to watch for:

- Eye drifting, especially in bright sunlight or when tired.
- Eye rubbing or frequent blinking.
- Occasional double vision (rare in young children).

Prognosis without treatment:

Stability: Many children (53% in UK studies) require only monitoring, with 0.5% progressing to constant exotropia.

Vision risks: Untreated cases may rarely develop amblyopia ("lazy eye") if the squint becomes constant.

Management Options

1. Monitoring

Recommended for mild cases (eye drifting <50% of waking hours).

Regular check-ups to assess control, vision, and alignment.



2. Non-surgical treatments

Glasses: Prescribed if short-sightedness worsens control. Over-minus lenses may help but carry a risk of accelerating myopia.

Eye exercises: Improve coordination in select cases.

3. Surgery

Indications:

- Squint occurs >50% of waking hours.
- Declining depth perception (3D vision) or difficulty re-aligning eyes after drifting.
- Cosmetic concerns affecting confidence.

Approaches:

- Weakening outer eye muscles (bilateral lateral rectus recession).
- Weakening outer eye muscle of one eye/tightening inner muscle on same eye (medial rectus resection/lateral rectus recession)
- Risks include overcorrection (20% in UK studies), potentially requiring repeat surgery.

When to contact your us:

- Increased frequency/duration of eye drifting.
- New double vision, headaches, or vision changes.
- Concerns about appearance or social interactions.

Note: Most children maintain normal vision and binocular function. Treatment aims to preserve alignment and quality of life, not necessarily eliminate all drifting episodes.

For further advice: Please contact your eye clinic or orthoptist if you have any concerns about treatment, side effects, or follow-up appointments.