

## MEDICAL



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## Strabismus

### STRABISMUS IN ADULTS

Your two eyes usually work together so they are both looking at the same object at the same time. Strabismus is a condition in which the eyes are misaligned and pointed in different directions some or all of the time. Nearly four in every 100 adults have strabismus. Most adults that have strabismus have had it since childhood.

However, strabismus can occur in adults that have had no childhood history of misalignment. It can be a disorder of the brain or a disorder of one or more muscles that move the eyes. If there has been no prior history, a doctor may evaluate the patient for medical or neurological causes such as:

- ◆ Strokes
- ◆ High blood pressure
- ◆ Head trauma
- ◆ Thyroid disease
- ◆ Brain tumors
- ◆ Diabetes
- ◆ Other neurological disorders

The vast majority of people with strabismus do not have any of these problems, occasionally misalignment of the eyes can occur after an eye surgery such as cataract surgery or retinal surgery.

### Symptoms

If the strabismus has been present since early childhood, the symptoms are usually minimal. However if it develops later, the most common symptom of adult strabismus is double vision.

Other symptoms such as; eyestrain, headaches, overlapped or blurred images, a pulling sensation around the eyes, reading difficulty and loss of depth perception, or holding the head in an abnormal positions to focus on an object may be present.

### Treatment

There is a misunderstanding that strabismus in adults is difficult or impossible to treat. Depending on the cause, strabismus can be treated several different ways. In fact, adults with strabismus have many different treatment options including:

- Eye exercises; eye muscle exercises can be helpful in treating a form of adult strabismus in which the eyes cannot align themselves for close work or reading. The eye exercises help re-train the eyes to focus inward together.

- Special glasses with prism; eyeglasses with prisms can correct mild double vision associated with adult strabis-



mus. A prism is a clear, wedge-shaped lens that bends, or refracts, light rays. For adults with mild double vision, the prism eyeglasses realign images together so that the eyes see only one image.

- Botox injections; if an overactive eye muscle is the cause of the strabismus, Botox injections can help. Botox is a drug that, when injected in small amounts, temporarily paralyzes muscles. It can last several months and may even result in a permanent change in eye alignment.

- Eye surgery; eye muscle surgery is the most common treatment for strabismus. Typically, strabismus occurs when the muscles surrounding the eyes act as though they are either too stiff or too weak. Your doctor can surgically loosen, tighten, or reposition certain eye muscles so that the eyes will be able to look straight. You may need more than one surgery.

### Diagnosis

There are two tests commonly used to diagnose strabismus. Your doctor will cover each eye one at a time while you look at an object in the room. Depending on how the eye shifts when the cover is removed, strabismus can be diagnosed.

The other test is done with a flashlight to test the alignment of the eyes. As you look at the light, your doctor can see a reflection on the front surface of your eye. If your eyes are properly aligned, the reflection will be in the same spot of each eye. If strabismus is present, the reflection from the light will not be in the same spot of each eye.

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## Bad grades? Faulty memory to blame

CHICAGO: Defects in working memory — the brain's temporary storage bin — may explain why one child cannot read her history book and another gets lost in algebra, new research suggests. As many as 10% of school age children may suffer from poor working memory, British experts said in a report last week, yet the problem remains rarely identified. "You can think of working memory as a pure measure of your child's potential," Tracey Alloway of Britain's Durham University said. "Some psychologists consider working memory to be the new IQ because we find that working memory is the single most important predictor of learning," Alloway said.

Many children with poor working memory are considered lazy or dim. But Alloway said with early identification and memory training, many of these underachievers can improve. Working memory allows people to hold and manipulate a few items in their minds, such as a phone number. Alloway compares working memory to a box. For adults, the basic box size is thought to be three to five items. People who have more on a mental grocery list are likely to forget something. "Since there is this limit, it is important to put in the right thing. Irrelevant information will clutter up working memory," Nelson Cowan, a cognitive psychologist at the University of Missouri, said. The question many researchers are struggling with is how to help people with this problem, which appears to be closely tied with

attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, or ADHD.

## Childhood now ends at 11

LONDON: Childhood is the golden era in one's life. But, a new study has found that it now effectively ends at the age of 11 with parents increasingly succumbing to "pester pressure" from their kids.

Researchers in Britain have found that children are forcing their parents to authorise freedoms that belie their years in contrast with the traditional upbringings experienced by their moms and dads.

According to the study, more and more teenagers are being allowed to drink alcohol, stay out late, sleep over at their boyfriend's or girlfriend's house and have sex, The Daily Telegraph reported on Monday.

Little girls in particular are growing up faster than ever and they no longer want to play with dolls. Instead they go on to pierce their ears, dye their hair and prefer to wear fashionable dresses.

The researchers for the Ramdom House publishers came to the conclusion after carrying out a survey of 1,170 parents with kids under 18.

The survey has showed a gulf between the parental code of a previous generation and the lenient attitudes of today's parents, with 55 per cent of parents saying that childhood is now "over by 11" - the tender age when children move from primary to secondary school.

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