

PATCHING ACTIVITIES

Your child is not going to like wearing a patch. Besides the cosmetic reasons, they will not like having to make visual judgements using their blurry eye. A way to help them around this is to start by patching the poor eye first and let them do the particular activity with only the good eye. Then switch the patch inviting the child to see if they can now do it with the poor eye. Warn them that you know it is not going to be as good as with their other eye but if they practise, they may get it as good.

There are many different patches you can use. If the child has to wear spectacles then these should always be on during any of these procedures. You can make a number of different types of patches for different activities. It is very simple to make pirate patches that can go around the head and fit underneath the spectacle lenses. Another way of patching is to cover the particular spectacle lenses either using a re-useable plastic stick or patch (available from us) or by covering the lens with frosted contact or electrical tape. Be ever mindful that the child will try and look over the top of their spectacles and always ensure that they are adjusted correctly on their nose for that very reason.

Home therapy works best when it does not interrupt home life too much. Plan your coming day accordingly by trying to assign various activities to various places eg at the dinner table at night, while the child is watching television during the adds, as they get into bed at night time, and when they are in their bath etc. It is far better to do lots of intensive short periods (5 to 10 minute sessions) three or four times a day rather than trying to do one concentrated hours worth of work per day. Obviously the more sessions you do the faster the change we can expect.

PATCHING ACTIVITIES:

1. Gross Movement Activities

- walking, running, hopping, skipping, riding a bike (be careful) and obstacle course.
- balance exercises (on a balance board, a plank of wood or walk rail, along a chalk line).
- ball kicking, bat and ball games (remember to use big balls).

2. Spatial and Eye-hand Activities

With each of the following activities, allow the dominant hand to be used both when the good eye and the bad eye is patched. You can switch hands and let each eye take its own turn with the non-dominant hand again giving the better eye the first turn. Remember our goal is to achieve equal performance of each eye in terms of speed, accuracy and ease.

Picking up items with a toothpick

Raisins, soft lollies, rice bubbles or fruit loops (make sure the child is old enough to handle a toothpick safely). Another of these activities is for them to use a pincer grip (thumb and finger) to pick up similar items eg M & M's, buttons, or picking up small beads with tweezers.

Peg Clipping

Hold a piece of string or rope in front of the child at different heights and positions, asking the child to search through the string finding a particular coloured peg and to clip it onto the string. If the child has trouble seeing the string, use coloured string and move or wobble the string slightly to help them locate it. Vary the position as you go.

Spearing Paper Clips

Place a number of paper clips (preferable different colours) on a table top. Using a tooth pick or knitting needle, ask the child to spear directly down into the gap of the paper clip. Tally how many "hits" they can accomplish in two minutes. Let the good eye compete against the bad eye.

Pounding Nails into Soft Wood

Using a piece of wood, mark where you want the nails to go with a black Texta having the child hammer the nails into the spots. If the child is too young to start the nail, you start the nail and let them pound it all the way through.

Scissor Activities

Cutting out pictures and pasting arrangements. Use a dark Texta to outline where the child has got to cut. Later try it without the Texta.

Craft Projects

Activities that the child really enjoys, such as making wallets or key chains, tying fishing flies, building models, embroidery or needle-point etc

Bean Bag Throwing.

To make a number of bean bags, just collect your old socks, fill the toes full of rice and sew the opening closed. Make a happy face on the bean bags and throw the bean bags into by using an old cardboard box. Cut a mouth opening big enough for the beanbags to comfortably fit through and draw some eyes on it. Put a brick inside the box so that if the beanbags hit the box, it does not move.

When the child throws the beanbag at the happy face, and misses, have the child tell you where the bean bag went, and what they have to do this time to correct the throw. In this way they self-monitor their spatial judgements. Again you can tally the hits against misses, good eye versus bad and of course your participation by you wearing the patch and having a go always adds to the fun and interest of the activity.

Cars and Dowels

Using some matchbox cars and some pieces of dowel (curtain rods 1 to 2 metres long depending on the height of the child) make a racing track using masking tape on the floor. Have the child push the cars around the track using the dowels. The child is not allowed to touch the cars with anything except the dowel. Competing against you to see who gets their car across the finishing line first.

Bead Stringing

Start with large beads and shoe laces. You can move towards using very small beads and fishing line. Showing the child how to string the beads on the line and have a race to see who can put 10 beads (or more if the child is old enough to count higher) on their string first. They generally are more interested in competing against you rather than the good eye versus the bad eye. Other variations include stringing macaroni, Fruit Loops or paper clips.

3. Finer Figure-Ground Discrimination Tasks.

Pencil and Paper Tasks

These tend to require a lot finer eye-hand and eyesight abilities. Be careful that your child is ready to do them. Activities include free-hand drawing, colouring in, doing dot to dot or tracing books, activity books, newspaper cross (cross out all the A's in the first line, all the B's in the second line etc).

TV and Computer Games

Some computer and electronic games loan themselves very well to this type of therapy. The detail has to be of reasonable size, and there must be movement involved in the task. The child must be reasonably competent at doing it with his good eye otherwise they'll just get frustrated and leave it. Do not forget to vary the task by making them use sometimes only their dominant hand and other times their less dominant. You can also have them standing up or standing on one foot.

4. Eye Movement and Eye Focusing Skills

Specific activities will be given when your child is ready for these procedures. These activities will usually entail the utilisation of special training lenses and prisms.