



# Droopy eyelid (ptosis) in children

## What is ptosis?

Ptosis is the medical name for drooping of the upper eyelid. It can happen in one or both eyes and can cause problems not only because of the way it looks, but also because it can interfere with the development of your child's vision. You may notice that your child tries to use their eyebrows to lift their eyelid or they may change their head position (such as a lifting their chin or tilting their head) to see past the eyelid. Often the eyelid position varies, for example, the lid may look more drooped in the evening or when your child is tired. You may also notice that your child finds it difficult to close their eyelid properly during sleep.

## What causes ptosis?

Ptosis can be there from birth (congenital) or develop after birth (acquired). The most common reason for a droopy eyelid is that the muscle which lifts the eyelid has not developed properly. This leaves the eyelid unable to open fully because the muscle is too weak to lift it up. In some children, the abnormal muscle also stops the eyelids from closing fully. Rarely, the droopy lid

may 'wink' or twitch open or shut when your child moves their mouth, which you may notice if they are drinking or chewing. Ptosis sometimes occurs along with other conditions like squints (abnormal eye positions). Other causes of ptosis include eyelid swelling and heaviness (due to irritation or lumps on the eyelid), or a weakness of the nerve supplying the muscle.

## What will happen at the appointment?

Not all children with ptosis need to attend hospital in person. Some children might be initially assessed by a clinic appointment via video call. If you attend a face to face appointment, your child may require several tests, which will be done by a number of eye care professionals during their visit. This includes an assessment of their vision and the movement of their eye and eyelids. We may also check to see if glasses might be required.

It would be very helpful if you can show us old photos of your child at your first appointment (on your phone is fine) to see if things have changed over time.

## Will any special tests be required?



In most cases, no special tests are needed, but in some circumstances the doctor may request these, if they think there might be an unusual cause for the ptosis.

### **What treatment is available?**

#### **Glasses or patches**

It is important that we assess early on whether a child is at risk of developing poor vision development (known as amblyopia or lazy eye) as a result of the ptosis. Poor vision development can happen because the pupil is partially or fully covered, blocking the vision, or sometimes the pressure of the lid on the eyeball affects the eye's ability to focus. In this case, your child may need to wear glasses or a patch for a few hours a day to help their vision develop. We will monitor your child's vision development by repeating the assessments at regular intervals. If your child sees best by changing the position of their head, please do not stop them from using this coping mechanism.

#### **Surgery**

You may want to talk to the eye care team about the option of surgery. Surgery in children less than six years old is usually only done to intervene where there is a serious threat to visual development. After this age, it is done in a small number of children and young people, to improve their appearance or lifestyle. If possible, we try to avoid eyelid-lifting surgery in children, particularly in early childhood and whilst they are still

growing. This is because long-term results are better when surgery is delayed until the face and eyelids have fully developed. You can find more information about eyelid surgery in our leaflet 'Surgery for droopy eyelid (ptosis) in children'.

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Information and advice on eye conditions and treatments from experienced ophthalmic-trained nurses.

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Moorfields' PALS team provides confidential advice and support to help you with any concerns you may have about the care we provide, guiding you through the different services available at Moorfields. The PALS team can also advise you on how to make a complaint.

