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AMBLYOPIA ACTIVITIES

To help your child develop vision in the amblyopic eye, it is necessary to “*USE*” the eye ***ACTIVELY***, not just passively, as in watching TV.

Here are a few activities that you can do with your child to help the amblyopic eye to “Learn” to see. All exercises must be done with the “good” eye patched. It is important that the activities NOT be done in a lackadaisical manner; adrenaline sets up the body to make changes. A “competitive,” adrenaline-boosting environment for these activities greatly increases their effectiveness. Establishing a “points” system, with rewards at various point levels, can increase motivation (and learning). Most important, make sure “eye-patching time” is “fun time with Mom or Dad.”

Slap-Jack card game. Not only does this develop visual recognition and hand-eye coordination, it stirs up adrenaline, which is necessary to cause development.

Pick-Up Sticks. Develops visual problem-solving, fine motor control and hand-eye coordination.

“Jacks.” A classic challenge for hand-eye coordination.

Punch-Out “O's.” Take a Pick-Up Stick, and use it to punch out any letter that contains an “O.” (d,g,o,p,q,b). Newspapers make good “O” sources. Do not allow “sliding in” to the letter. The tip of the Pick-Up Stick must be guided to a precise landing inside each “O.” It is easy to see how accurately the stick is guided, by inspecting the holes after the session.

“Darts.” One of the “safe” forms of darts, without sharp points, is best to use when a person who may not have very good control is throwing them!

Lite-Brite or other pegboard game. You make a pattern on one pegboard, and the child looks at it, and then, RELYING ON MEMORY, tries to match it on another pegboard.

Etch-a-Sketch. Discourage straight lines going vertically and horizontally. These can be done

with the eyes CLOSED! Much more effective progress is made with diagonals, loops and circles. Even “writing” in cursive! Or, use a clear plastic overlay to draw out mazes, and have the child follow the maze.

Pitch-Back. Basically, a net mounted on springs inside a square frame, it returns beanbags thrown at it, often with a lot of energy! The child can do this without intense adult interaction, and it is FUN!

Vis-a-vis Pursuits. The child holds a pen or pencil with its tip within an inch of the tip of a pen or pencil held by you. The child attempts to keep the tip of his/her pen within an inch of yours, while you move yours in smooth, but erratic patterns. It is important for the child's head to remain still, while the EYES follow the movement of the pen.

Roll-Bounce-Toss. With a SOFT rubber ball, sit on the floor facing each other. Begin by rolling the ball back and forth. Remember, the eye being trained is LEARNING to track objects, so it is important to start below the child's normal skill level. When this becomes easy for the child, toss the ball so that it bounces several times on its way to the child. As skill increases, decrease the number of bounces, until only one bounce is needed. Then toss in a high arc. At this point, the “reference points” of the floor are lost, which makes this a more challenging developmental step. The reason for using a very SOFT ball will become apparent.

The game “Operation,” in which toy “organs” must be guided through a maze with a magnet. The same principle is true for any mazes, including those in books of puzzles and mazes.

Interlocking picture puzzles. The similarly-shaped pieces demand visual discrimination of shape and size, as well as color. Puzzles are useful, as long as there is a competitive atmosphere. No “woolgathering” should be allowed, since this reduces the effectiveness of the activity.

Egg Races. Holding a **HARD-BOILED** egg in a spoon, race through a safety-designed obstacle course, trying to break the old speed record, *without breaking any eggs*.

The card game “Concentration.” This game of memory demands visual recognition of shape and visual memory of location.

Hopscotch, Jump Rope, Tee Ball, or any number of games can be played while “patched.” OF course, safety is always a concern, so no risky activities should be attempted (riding a bicycle on a street share by autos, for instance).

Reading and writing activities are also somewhat helpful, especially when the parent is unable to participate in shared activities.

Video games are of only limited value, since no “real-world” hand-eye coordination is required. Some progress may come from their use, if parental involvement is not possible.