

INFORMATION FOR PATIENTS

Brown's syndrome (superior oblique tendon sheath syndrome)

This leaflet explains the signs, possible symptoms and treatment of Brown's syndrome.

What is Brown's syndrome?

Brown's syndrome is an uncommon eye muscle problem where one or both eyes cannot move fully upwards and inwards. It is usually present at birth (congenital) but can rarely occur later in life. Although it is present from birth it may not be noticed until the child is older as babies don't often look upwards and sideways.

We have six muscles around the eye which allow us to move the eyes in a particular direction. Brown's syndrome occurs when there is a problem affecting one of the muscles called the superior oblique. The superior oblique passes through a ring of cartilage called the trochlea. In Brown's syndrome there is a problem at the site of the trochlea so the muscle cannot pass through freely. Some patients notice a 'clicking sensation' when they attempt to look up and inwards.

Brown's syndrome can be caused by the muscle being too short and tight or a swelling or nodule on the muscle tendon.

Many congenital cases do not change over time. They are usually due to a short, tight muscle, which produces the restriction. However, occasionally the condition can be intermittent or improve over time if it is caused by a nodule on the muscle tendon.

Cases which develop later in life are usually due to trauma or inflammation.

What does it look like?

The following photograph shows a right Brown's syndrome, when the patient is looking up and to his left. The right eye is unable to move upwards to the left. Often it can appear that the problem is with the unaffected eye because when one eye gets stuck it can look like the other eye has drifted off.



What problems occur with Brown's syndrome?

Most people with Brown's syndrome have no problems.

Children or adults with Brown's syndrome learn not to look in the direction of the restriction to avoid double vision.

Sometimes a head posture is adopted to place the affected eye away from the position where its movement is restricted to avoid double vision.

Rarely, children with Brown's syndrome may develop amblyopia (poor vision) in one eye, because they ignore the eye to avoid double vision.

How is Brown's syndrome treated?

Most people with Brown's syndrome have no vision problems, and no treatment is required. They just avoid looking into the areas of restricted eye movements to avoid double vision.

Most children who attend the eye clinic with Brown's syndrome are invited for regular check ups to ensure their vision develops normally, but often no treatment is required.

The need for glasses is no greater than for any other child. However, glasses will be prescribed if necessary.

If your child has reduced vision in one eye, patching (occlusion) may be advised.

If a very abnormal head posture is present and/or, if your child cannot move the affected eye into a straight ahead position, surgery may be considered. Surgical treatment of Brown's syndrome is aimed at eliminating restriction of eye movement, but most people with Brown's syndrome do not need surgery.

Contact details

If you have any queries about your child's treatment please contact the Orthoptic Department:

- **Email:** Sfh-tr.orthoptics@nhs.net
- **Urgent orthoptic queries:**
 - Telephone: 07768615247, Monday to Wednesday, 8am-4pm
 - Telephone: 07825866704, Thursday to Friday, 8am-4pm
- **For appointment booking/cancellation:**
 - Telephone: 01623 672383.

Further sources of information

NHS Choices: www.nhs.uk/conditions

Our Website: www.sfh-tr.nhs.uk

BIOS Website: www.orthoptics.org.uk

Patient Experience Team (PET)

PET is available to help with any of your compliments, concerns or complaints, and will ensure a prompt and efficient service.

If you would like this information in an alternative format, for example large print or easy read, or if you need help with communicating with us, for example because you use British Sign Language, please let us know. You can call the Patient Experience Team on 01623 672222 or email sfh-tr.PET@nhs.net.

This document is intended for information purposes only and should not replace advice that your relevant health professional would give you.

External websites may be referred to in specific cases. Any external websites are provided for your information and convenience. We cannot accept responsibility for the information found on them.

If you require a full list of references for this leaflet, please email sfh-tr.patientinformation@nhs.net or telephone 01623 622515, extension 6927.

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