

Sudden Onset of Double Vision

Double vision is known medically as 'diplopia'

What is double vision?

Double vision is when you see two of everything. The images may be side to side, one above the other, tilted, or a combination of all three. It can occur in just one eye (monocular) or both eyes (binocular).

When double vision comes on and is sudden and gets worse, this is an ophthalmic emergency and requires immediate review by a specialist to find a cause. Don't worry, most of the time it is not serious.

What is binocular and monocular double vision?

You can test if you have monocular or binocular vision yourself. Do this by covering one eye and seeing if the image becomes one again. If the double vision disappears irrespective of which eye is covered, this is known as binocular vision and generally caused by an imbalance in muscle function of the eye. If the double vision is still present when you cover one eye and not the other, the eye with the double vision is the problem and requires an examination.

Binocular double vision is far more common than monocular double vision.

What is the cause of binocular double vision?

Generally binocular double vision results in one of the 6 eye muscles not working normally. Your eyes therefore stop working as a pair and work individually resulting in double vision.

Causes of binocular double vision include muscles that become:

- Paralyzed or weak, e.g. Stroke or Myasthenia Gravis
- Restricted movement, e.g. thyroid eye disease
- Abnormalities of the nerves controlling eye movement, e.g. myasthenia gravis, sixth nerve palsy

General health issues can result in binocular double vision, including diabetes, blood pressure issues and sometimes trauma to the eye.

Making a referral:

What are the causes of monocular double vision?

This is less common but can be caused by:

- Astigmatism, as in Keratoconus
- Dry eyes
- Retinal problems, such as retinal detachments
- Cataracts

How will having double vision affect me?

Symptoms of double vision is very disorientating and can make you feel very unwell. Daily tasks such as reading and driving can be affected. You should not drive unless you have been treated for double vision and advised by a specialist

How is double vision be treated?

Treatment for double vision is dependent on the underlying cause. For binocular double vision resulting from nerve problems and are atypical are often investigated by the ophthalmologist who may undertake blood tests and scans to rule out sinister causes.

Double vision is generally managed by:

1. Wearing glasses, sometimes with prisms
2. Eye Exercises
3. Covering one eye
4. Using Botox injections into eye muscles, causing them to remain relaxed
5. More unusually surgery to correct the positioning of eye muscles

Can you drive with double vision?

No - if you are seeing double vision, then you are not legally insured to drive. However, if any of the treatments described can be proved to stop you seeing double, then your motor insurance will be valid. You should check with the DVLA and your insurer in the first instance.

Making a referral:

Prognosis

The outcome of double vision depends on the cause.

It can be permanent but generally the above measures can help to resolve the double vision although using the aids maybe permanent.

Operations are only carried out when the eye condition is stable.

Making a referral:

Email: Info@Communityeyecare.org.uk

Tel: 01772 717167

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