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## Eye care - orthoptists

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### Summary

- Orthoptists are university trained, registered eye health care professionals.
  - Early detection of eye disease and regular monitoring is the best protection against loss of vision.
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An orthoptist is an eye care professional who specialises in the detection, diagnosis and treatment of vision and eye disorders. Early detection and monitoring of certain eye conditions through regular check-ups is the best protection against vision loss and sight problems. Orthoptic treatment aims to relieve symptoms and improve vision.

Orthoptists mostly work in specialist eye clinics and public hospitals, within an eye healthcare team and alongside ophthalmologists. Orthoptists monitor eye disease and provide non-surgical treatment, which includes prescribing glasses for children and adults. Orthoptists also provide low vision rehabilitation services to people with vision impairment.

### Orthoptists in eye healthcare

Orthoptists are university trained health professionals. They are integral to the work of the eye healthcare team in providing quality care for patients. Some of the common eye conditions orthoptists investigate, monitor and assist in treating are:

- Glaucoma
- Cataracts
- Diabetic eye disease
- Age-related macular degeneration
- Refractive error (need for glasses)
- Vision consequences of stroke and neurological diseases.

Orthoptists also play an important role in the care of patients before and after surgery, in particular those who undergo cataract, retinal or refractive surgery.

### Eye movement problems and children's vision

Orthoptists exclusively specialise in treating children and adults who have:

- Strabismus (turned eye)
- Amblyopia (lazy eye)
- Diplopia (double vision)
- Eye movement abnormalities that may be of neurologic origin or result from trauma.

### Vision rehabilitation

Rehabilitation programs are designed to reverse vision loss in children with amblyopia (lazy eye), to assist people with eye conditions to achieve comfortable vision and to help people with vision impairment get the most out of their remaining (residual) sight.

Depending on the disorder, some of the treatments may include:

- Patching
  - Orthoptic exercises
  - Glasses
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- Lighting.

### **The need for regular check-ups**

Early detection and regular monitoring of eye disease is important as many conditions can be prevented from progressing and becoming a threat to the person's sight.

Children need regular eye checks for:

- Strabismus (turned eye)
- Amblyopia (lazy eye)
- Refractive error (need for glasses).

Adults need regular eye checks for:

- Glaucoma
- Diabetic eye disease
- Cataract.

### **How to find an orthoptist**

Orthoptists work in a range of settings, including:

- Public hospitals working with children's vision or other eye problems – for example, the Royal Victorian Eye and Ear Hospital and the Royal Children's Hospital
- Specialist eye clinics
- Vision rehabilitation facilities
- Universities and affiliated research units.

### **Where to get help**

- Your orthoptist
- **Orthoptics Australia** Tel. (03) 9895 4463
- Your doctor

### **Things to remember**

- Orthoptists are university trained, registered eye health care professionals.
- Early detection of eye disease and regular monitoring is the best protection against loss of vision.

**This page has been produced in consultation with and approved by:**

Orthoptics Australia

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