

SUGGESTIONS FOR TODDLERS, PRESCHOOLERS AND SCHOOL AGE CHILDREN

Pick a time of day when your child is not tired or hungry. If possible, pick a time when you are also not especially tired or hungry!

Allow your child to play with the patch at home and explain that the patch will be worn for a period of time each day to help him see better.

Experience has taught us that the best place to begin patching your child may not be at home. This will depend on your child's vision when patched and the recommendations of your doctor. For some children, it may be better to go to the neighborhood mall, visit a friend, go to the park, attend a play group or visit a toy store. Take your toddler to a new and visually stimulating environment. If beginning at home, introduce a new activity at the same time that you introduce the patch: a new video, computer game, or an interesting toy or art set.

Introduce the patch once your child is involved in an activity, such as being surrounded by demonstration toys in the store. Place your child on the floor, put the patch on and keep a conversation going about the toys. If the baby tires of the toys, move to a new area and show him a different car or truck, etc. Depending on your child, the patch may only be successfully worn for five minutes or, he may be cooperative for up to an hour. Once you sense his frustration is getting too high, remove the patch and compliment him on how well he did. Tell him that tomorrow he will have another turn to wear his eye patch.

On the second day, try a different activity. Once again, engage your child in an activity, like going to a pet store where he can play with the puppies. After adequate time has passed, remove the patch and compliment him, using your most enthusiastic voice. If he becomes bored or impatient while patched, move to a new area of the store, or go for a walk outside. The more visually interesting the environment, the more distracted your child will be.

Repeat this process every day for approximately two weeks. Gradually, if necessary, build up the patching time as quickly as possible, until you have satisfied your doctor's prescription.

Preschool children are often successfully patched at school since they are busy and occupied. It can be difficult to patch a school-aged child when he is participating in an academic program. It can be very frustrating to try to attend to a learning experience when vision is compromised. Ask your doctor if you can patch less at school and more on weekends.

Play activities such as tumbling classes or swim and gym (with the child's head out of the water) are wonderful times for patching as children are active and distracted.

Bringing other children or adults along is often helpful because it adds to the distraction and helps you to accomplish your goal.

When you begin patching at home, it is useful to have a new video or audio tape available. You might consider inviting a playmate over to play or having grandma come for a visit.

Kitchen activities can be very exciting and interesting as well ... bake cookies, make pudding, peel fruit by hand, shuck corn, "fingerpaint" with chocolate pudding ... keep the activities interesting and varied.

If your child attempts to remove the patch, simply put on another one. Explain that mommy or daddy is in charge of the patch and will take it off when the time is up. Immediately introduce a new activity. Be patient, but firm about the need to leave the patch on. Sometimes using a timer can be helpful.

Eventually your child will be able to wear the patch for the required number of hours.

OTHER SUGGESTIONS

- Go to a local park or playground not familiar to your child
- Visit a large mall, perhaps only spending time in two stores per visit
- Visit friends or relatives
- Enroll in "Mommy, Daddy and Me" activities
- Visit a pool or jacuzzi (keeping the child's face out of the water)
- "Wash" your car or a friend's car
- Take short walks
- Visit a bakery, car wash, or fast food restaurant with a play area
- Go to a fire station
- "Paint" the sidewalk or fence with a large paintbrush and a bucket of water
- Plant in the garden
- Play dress-up
- Prepare edible play dough
- Play with bubbles in a friend's yard
- Visit a museum or art gallery
- Enlist the help of a teenager or older child
- Link patching to pleasant activities based on your child's preferences (mealtimes, T.V. time, favorite games)
- Don't use the patch as a punishment
- Give rewards once successful patching is accomplished. Reward him on a regular basis to reinforce this positive behavior.