Living with one eye

A young child who grows up with only one eye will never know the difference. He will develop and learn along with his age group. Older children and adults who lose vision in one eye will need some time to adjust. Having vision in one eye should not affect how a person lives. But the first few months will be the hardest. With time, the person will learn to adapt to having one good eye.

What is different?

Vision for a person who cannot use both eyes is slightly different than it is for those with 2 eyes.

- The change will reduce your field of vision. This is how much a person can see without turning his head.
- The change will impact your depth perception. This is your ability to judge how far away an object is.

Depth perception is used many times throughout the day. It is used when you throw and catch a ball, drive a car, pour juice into a cup, reach out to shake someone’s hand, and step up or down a curb. At first, these visual changes can make it hard to do everyday things. But with time you can use other visual clues to move more safely and complete these tasks.

How to adapt to vision with one eye

When you lose vision in one eye, you must adapt to the smaller field of vision and loss of depth perception. This will often happen naturally. It is still helpful to make simple changes to the environment and to learn new ways to do things on your own.

Tips for the person with one eye

- Use touch to see how far away something is. For example: When pouring liquids, avoid spills by lowering the lip of the bottle until it is gently touching the lip of the cup.
- Make full use of head movements to adjust for the loss of visual field. For example: Turn your head both ways to look for traffic before crossing the street.
- It may be helpful to put high contrast masking tape at the top and front edge of the stairs to give you extra clues about where to step. Use handrails and slide your foot to the edge of the stair to feel where to step up or down.
- With time you will learn to find other clues to know the distance of objects. For example: If you know the size of a drink can from holding one in the past, you may be able to tell how far away it is by how big or small it looks. If the drink can appears large, that tells you it is closer and you would not need to reach as far.

This document is not intended to take the place of the care and attention of your personal physician or other professional medical services. Our aim is to promote active participation in your care and treatment by providing information and education. Questions about individual health concerns or specific treatment options should be discussed with your physician.
You should always protect your good vision eye. This includes wearing sunglasses when outside and wearing goggles when playing sports.

**Ways to help the good eye adapt**

Over time, you will learn clues to make up for loss of depth perception and a smaller field of vision. But these ideas may help you adapt quicker:

**For children or teens**
- Practice walking on a straight line, such as a sidewalk crack or a piece of masking tape on the floor.
- Play catch with a larger, softer ball. This is a great way to learn other ways of knowing how far and fast the ball is coming.
- Throw a ball toward a target.
- Try reaching for items to practice eye-hand coordination with your limited depth perception.
- Learn to turn your head to the side to make up for the smaller visual field. This is most important for safety when crossing the street.
- Do things that improve balance. In a safe setting, practice swinging, rolling, jumping, or dancing.

**For parents of infants and toddlers**
- Hold the child with good eye away from your body, so the child must turn head to look at your face.
- Place light up toys and noise making toys on the poor vision side to encourage head turning.
- Play with toys that roll across the room. For example, use toy cars or balls. Encourage the child to follow them with his head.
- Place favorite toys up high on shelves, down low off the floor, and in far parts of the room. This will help your child get in the habit of exploring the space around him.
- Encourage the child to reach toward toys rather than placing them in his hands. This allows the child to practice eye-hand coordination with his limited depth perception.

**Questions?**

To learn more about adapting to life after loss of vision in one eye, call Rehabilitation Services at 595-3621. If you are inside the hospital, dial 3621. If you are outside the Memphis area, call toll-free 1-866-2ST JUDE (1-866-278-5833), extension 3621.