

What is Brown's Syndrome?

Brown's Syndrome is a type of eye movement problem in which one, or both of the eyes have difficulty looking upwards. In over 90% of people with Brown's Syndrome only one eye is affected. It is most commonly present from birth.

Characteristics

The eyes are usually straight when looking directly ahead, or looking downwards. In these positions there is normal 3D vision.

When looking up and to one side with the affected eye, there is a restriction of movement. As the other eye continues moving normally this means the eyes are not aligned. Sometimes the person will have symptoms when looking in this position, for example slight discomfort.

The person may raise their chin slightly to avoid using their eyes in the upwards position. Many people are unaware they are doing this.

Causes

The affected muscle is called the 'Superior Oblique' which works on a pulley system called the Trochlea. The muscle tendon becomes stuck when it does not run smoothly through the Trochlea.

There are a few suggested reasons for the restricted movement of the Superior Oblique through the Trochlea:-

- Developmental – a small Trochlea opening or a thick membrane sheath surrounding the muscle.
- Inflammation – a small swelling/nodule on the muscle tendon preventing movement through the Trochlea. Occasionally the nodule may be able to pass through the Trochlea, so the difficulty looking upwards would be intermittent. If this is the case, a 'clicking' noise may be heard as this movement occurs.
- Inelastic Superior Oblique tendon
- Trauma – an injury affecting the Superior Oblique muscle.

Treatment

The majority of people with Brown's Syndrome requires no treatment. If the person has straight eyes, good vision and no symptoms there is no need to intervene. Sometimes glasses are needed to improve their vision, but Brown's Syndrome does not increase the chance of needing glasses.

When Brown's Syndrome is found in children, they are monitored in the Orthoptic Department. This is to ensure their vision develops normally and that they do not suffer with any symptoms from their condition.

If there is a squint/turn in the eyes when looking straight ahead or if the person has an uncomfortable head position to keep their eyes straight, surgery may be appropriate. Surgery is only usually recommended for severe symptoms as the results can be unpredictable.

Some cases of Brown's Syndrome improve spontaneously with time. In children, it is preferable to wait and see if their condition changes as they grow.

Notes or further instructions:-

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