

Children with droopy eyelids (Ptosis)

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The Tribune, (Health and Fitness) New Delhi, Wednesday, March 30, 2006.

Anjali was very worried about her son's eyes. She thought that one of the eyes was smaller than the other and felt that it was because of something she had done wrong in her pregnancy. She was worried that he would have sub-normal vision. Anjali's son has a condition of a droopy eyelid called Ptosis. In this condition, the eyelid droops down and so, one eye looks smaller than the other. This is a congenital condition that is by birth and as yet, no causative factors have been identified. Some of the frequently asked questions regarding this condition, by parents, are:

How common is congenital ptosis?

It is fairly common in our population and occasionally there may be a family history. It is usually present in one eyelid, occasionally both eyelids maybe droopy.

Does ptosis affect the vision of the child?

If the Ptosis is moderate to severe that is, the droop is pronounced; the pupil maybe covered which prevents light from entering the eye. In these cases the child may develop a lazy eye and so needs to be treated early. There maybe an associative refractive error in which case the child may need to wear glasses.

How can we make out if the child has a lazy eye?

It is not easy for parents to determine if the child has a lazy eye. They should bring the child to an ophthalmologist for examination.

How can Ptosis be corrected?

Ptosis can be corrected by surgery.

When ptosis surgery should be performed

Ptosis surgery is usually performed when the child is at the pre-school age (ie.4-5yrs). At this age, accurate assessment of the child is possible and by correction the child avoids the teasing of schoolmates.

If the ptosis is severe and covering the pupil, then corrective surgery should be performed earlier.

What kind of surgery is this: major or minor?

In the procedure commonly performed, the weak muscle is strengthened. This surgery is done under general anaesthesia and takes approximately 1 1/2 hours.

Does this surgery affect the vision?

No, the surgery is performed on the eyelids. The eyeball is not touched. if the child had a lazy eye, the vision may subsequently improve with amblyopia therapy.

Are there any other causes of droopy eyelids?

Apart from the ptosis that the child is born with (congenital), this condition may be acquired later on in life. The patient would need to be investigated for the cause and then treated accordingly. Some of these conditions are amenable to medical treatment and don't require surgery.
