

## PHORIAS (HETEROPHORIA)

### Q What is heterophoria?

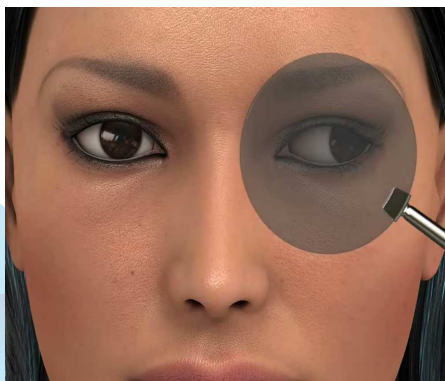
A Heterophoria is the term used to describe the condition where the eyes have a tendency to become misaligned when not being used e.g. when the eye is covered. However, when being used normally, the eye remains straight. For this reason, heterophoria is often referred to as a 'latent squint'.

### Q How does heterophoria affect my vision?

A Heterophoria is very common and in the majority of cases does not cause any symptoms. In general, the larger the heterophoria the more effort that is required to keep both eyes aligned. In some cases this can result in headaches, eye strain and double vision.

### Q What causes heterophoria?

A Each eye is surrounded by six muscles which allow us to move the eyes and point both eyes at the object we are looking at. Controlling these muscles is a delicate balancing act and occasionally the balance is upset and the eyes have a tendency to become misaligned. This can be caused by the incorrect placement of a muscle, a weakness of one or more of the muscles or a problem with the nerves supplying the muscles.



Small degrees of misalignment can be overcome so that the eyes are aligned under normal

conditions. However, when one eye is covered the eye will move to its "natural" position which may be outward, inward, upward or downward. This is known as a heterophoria.

### Q What can be done to help?

A In most cases heterophoria does not cause any symptoms so treatment is not required. If you are suffering headaches, eye strain or double vision as a result of a heterophoria, your optometrist will advise you on the most appropriate form of treatment.

In some cases the symptoms can be relieved by carrying out exercises to strengthen the eye muscles. In other cases, spectacles may be required.

