Nystagmus Frequently Asked Questions

This document needs to be expanded

The following answers apply to most cases of congenital or 'early onset' nystagmus. The situation is different for nystagmus that develops in adulthood.

Are there any toys, games, exercises or books which can help?

Encouraging a child with nystagmus to use his/her eyes is very important, especially in the early years. With games and toys, anything that is big and brightly colored is easier. It also helps if the toys make a noise and have a distinctive feel.

Is Nystagmus becoming more common?

The answer to this question is 'we don't know'. It is probably being more accurately diagnosed nowadays. Also, people are now told they have nystagmus, whereas in the past it was not always made clear to them what was wrong with their eyes.

What is distance vision like?

Good distance vision will be limited, but most people with nystagmus can see well enough to lead an independent life and those with only CN usually lead a normal, productive life. Most with CN or LMLN are able to make out fine detail if they view an object closely.

Can children with nystagmus go to mainstream school?

Most children with nystagmus go to mainstream school; all with CN or LMLN only should do so. Those with severe visual defects will almost always benefit from special support.

Can people with nystagmus read?

Congenital nystagmus alone will not stop anyone from reading; other associated visual problems may slow reading speed and make it hard to read for long periods; large print will help.

Can people with nystagmus watch movies at the theater?

Almost certainly yes. Again, a distinction must be made between CN or LMLN and other visual problems. For the latter, it may be necessary to sit close to the front, but with a large screen, these people should be able to enjoy a (good) movie.
Is it hereditary?

It can be. In some cases however there is clearly a family background sometimes going back over several generations. In others the disorder appears to be a singular occurrence. In cases of ocular albinism and cone dysfunction, it is known that there is a definite hereditary basis. Genetic research is one of the fastest growing areas of medicine in the nineties. It is likely to prove of great importance to those with eye problems such as nystagmus. We suggest that if you are concerned with this aspect of nystagmus you consult your doctor and ask to be referred to a specialist in genetics for advice.