

Frequent Blinking in Children

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Blinking is a normal reflex that protects the eye from dryness, bright light, and fingers or other objects coming towards it. Blinking also regulates tears, which nourish and cleanse the surface of the eye. The blinking rate in newborns is only 2 times per minute. This increases to 14-17 times per minute in adolescence and remains at this rate through the remainder of life. Blinking can also increase in response to pain, bright light, changes in temperature and humidity, and conversation

WHAT IS EXCESSIVE BLINKING ?

Excessive blinking is blinking that seems more frequent than typical. It can involve one or both eyes. It may seem more forceful than normal. It may also be associated with other movements (tics) of the face, head or neck.

Excessive blinking may be thought to be abnormal if:

- 1) It affects normal life and day to day activity.
- 2) It interferes with normal vision, as when one is driving.
- 3) It doesn't stop within a few hours.
- 4) It is associated with other symptoms.

CAUSES OF FREQUENT BLINKING

1) Near sightedness(Myopia)

Nearsightedness or myopia is a condition in which children can only see those objects that are nearby. Children complain of having watery eyes, headaches, blurry visions and yet again, excessive blinking.

2) Tics

Spasms caused by muscles are called tics. These movements are involuntary and cannot be controlled.

This condition is more frequent in childhood

.Triggering factors include anxiety or fear, side effects of medicines or "chronic motor disorder", Tourette's syndrome.

3) Blepharitis

An infection caused by bacteria or dandruff

Swelling, itching and tenderness on the eyelids in addition to irritation, scaliness and redness.

Frequent washing of face and warm compress can help in early resolution of blepharitis.

4) Tourette Syndrome and Obsessive Compulsive Disorder

This disorder occurs between three to ten years and is generally noticeable when a child is aged around seven years.

Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD) also triggers involuntary tic and blinking.

5) Eye strain

As children these days watch television and use computers and other gadgets for long hours, it is very common that they experience eye strain. It is important that parents keep a check on children that they do not read or watch television in dim lights or no lights respectively to avoid visual strain or changes.

6) Allergies

If continuous blinking comes with irritation, itchiness or redness then, in most cases, it is due to different allergies.

7) Dry eyes

Continuous blinking may make your child feel a little better or this may be your child's way of rehydrating his eyes, as one may call it.

Artificial tear drops may help in such situation. Also, humidifiers help in soothing dry eyes

8) **HABITUAL BLINKING**

Treatment for FREQUENT BLINKING

Refractive error should be corrected first. Appropriate glasses prescribed for myopia and hypermetopia. Any anterior segment pathology causing irritation should be adequately treated.

No pharmacological intervention is needed in most cases of tics. Muscle spasms resolve spontaneously. Healthcare providers believe that tics are a consequence of fear, fatigue, anxiety or even boredom.

For controlling or treating OCD, physicians often prescribe different stimulants. If this condition gets extremely out of hands then physicians may prescribe combinations of different stimulants and sometimes patients are even treated with antidepressants or other medicines.

HOW CAN YOU HELP YOUR CHILD?

Your child needs to relax. your child needs to make sure his self-esteem and confidence is intact.

Light routine for child and make sure your child is not over burdened.

Praise your child and encourage him to do things he likes.

Track of triggering factors should be kept. (Has your child gone through anything that made him nervous? Was his behavior particularly due to something he was not anticipating or was scared of? In general, you should try to nag your child less about everyday chores, grades or habits and encourage the positivity in him.

Ignore when your child is experiencing facial spasms. Try not to show him you are noticing what is going on and try not to stare or make comments about it.

When to be Concerned ?

If blinking eyes in children is occurring with other symptoms such as squinting and lack of recognition for everyday people and things. If you notice anything of this sort, then you must consult the doctor right away.

References

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