

## **SIXTH NERVE PALSY**

Three main cranial nerves, the third, fourth and sixth nerves, are responsible for eye movement. Your sixth cranial nerve, also called the abducens nerve, controls the lateral rectus muscle that turns your eye outward, away from your nose. According to the Merck Manuals Medical Online Library, when this nerve is palsied, or paralyzed, "The affected eye cannot turn fully outward and may turn inward when people look straight ahead."

### **POSSIBLE CAUSES AND EFFECTS**

Multiple events can cause sixth nerve palsy. Head trauma, stroke, aneurism, tumors, infections, blockage or lack of blood supply, childhood virus or multiple sclerosis are some conditions that may be responsible for the disorder. Occasionally the condition is congenital. Sometimes it can occur with no other symptoms, and in those cases, your doctor may not find the underlying cause. Often, you will recover from this condition within a few months if your doctor finds no other issues.

### **SYMPTOMS AND DIAGNOSIS**

Sixth nerve palsy often presents as double vision, and your eye may turn inward involuntarily. Depending on the cause of this condition, you may experience other symptoms including headaches, swelling in the eye, numbness about the face, vision loss or impaired eye movement in directions other than outward. Your doctor will likely diagnose the problem by examining inside the eye with an ophthalmoscope. If that is fruitless, a CT scan, an MRI or a spinal tap may be used to test for tumors or other problems.

### **TREATMENT**

Generally, the treatment for abducens palsy targets the underlying cause of the problem, if the cause can be determined. Solutions might include an eye patch, prism eyeglasses, or surgery in some instances.