

For Teachers

When Is Learning Difficulty Due to a Vision Problem?

While learning occurs through a number of complex and interrelated processes, vision plays a key role. Many signs, symptoms and behaviors associated with learning disabilities -- Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) and other learning problems -- are similar to those caused by vision problems. This is why it is so important that a developmental vision examination be part of the interdisciplinary evaluation of all children who are failing to succeed in school.



Here are some signs and symptoms to look for that may indicate a vision problem

Symptoms

- Complains of blurred vision
- Rubs eyes frequently
- Squints

- Closes or covers one eye
- Occasionally sees double
- Rubs eyes frequently
- Able to read for only a short time
- Poor reading comprehension

- Holds things very close
- Complains of blurred vision
- Poor reading comprehension
- Says eyes are tired
- Able to read for only a short time
- Has headaches when reading

- Moves head excessively when reading
- Frequently loses place, skips lines when reading
- Uses finger to keep place
- Poor reading comprehension
- Short attention span

- Mistakes words with similar beginnings
- Difficulty recognizing letters, words, or simple shapes and forms
- Can't distinguish the main idea from insignificant details
- Trouble learning basic math concepts of size, magnitude, and position

- Trouble visualizing what is read
- Poor reading comprehension
- Poor speller
- Trouble with mathematical concepts
- Poor recall of visually presented material

- Sloppy handwriting and drawing
- Can't stay on lines
- Poor copying skills
- Can respond orally but not in writing

- Trouble learning right and left
- Reverses letters and words
- Trouble writing and remembering letters and numbers

Possible Vision Problems

Nearsightedness, Farsightedness, or Astigmatism

(inability to see clearly in the distance or up close)

Eye coordination problems

(inability to coordinate the eyes together effectively)

Eye focusing problems

(inability to easily refocus eyes or maintain clear focus)

Eye tracking problems

(inadequate ability to smoothly and accurately move the eyes from one point to another)

Faulty visual form perception

(inability to discriminate differences in size, shape, or form)

Faulty visual memory

(inability to remember and understand what is seen)

Faulty visual motor integration

(inability to process and reproduce visual images by writing or drawing)

Difficulty with laterality and directionality

(Poor development of left/right awareness)

Many of these vision problems will not be detected during a school vision screening or limited vision assessment as part of a school physical or routine pediatric health evaluation.

A developmental vision evaluation is required to test all the visual skills critical for reading and learning.

For more information visit the College of Optometrists in Vision Development at www.covd.org or www.vlca.com