



COLLEGE OF
OPTOMETRISTS IN
VISION DEVELOPMENT
PREVENTION • ENHANCEMENT • REHABILITATION

Learning-Related Vision Problems—Q & A

Q1: What are "Learning-Related Vision Problems?"

A: Learning-Related Vision Problems affect the way a child's eyes work with each other and the brain to collect and interpret visual information. They can be as simple as an inability to see close-up (eye focusing problem) or as complex as a cognitive inability to "visualize" or interpret what their eyes are seeing. In many cases, a child's visual abilities aren't sufficiently developed for him/her to be able to read — or learn to read — effectively. Unfortunately, children with learning-related problems usually don't tell a parent or teacher they have a problem. They don't realize they are supposed to see letters, numbers, objects — the world — in a different way.

Q2: What causes Learning-Related Vision Problems?

A: Research indicates the problem can be due to a difficulty in either acquiring or processing the information we receive through our eyes. The visual skills needed to see effectively may be lacking or the brain may not be sufficiently trained to interpret what the eyes see. Without these abilities, the child or adult spends so much energy just "looking at" and "decoding" the written word, there is little mental energy left to comprehend and remember the word's meaning.

Q3: What specific visual dysfunctions contribute to Learning-Related Vision Problems?

A: Inadequately developed or ineffective visual abilities in the following areas can lead to Learning-Related Vision Disorders:

- eye tracking skills (eyes staying on target)
- eye teaming skills (eyes working in synchronized fashion)
- binocular vision (blending images from both eyes together at the same time)
- accommodation (eye focusing)
- visual-motor integration (eye-hand coordination)
- visual perception (visual memory, visual form perception, directionality)

Q4: Can vision therapy really help children with ADD?

A: Many children diagnosed with Attention Deficit Disorder (and labeled as candidates for drug treatment) have not been properly evaluated for visual problems. What may be thought to be a lack of interest in reading and schoolwork by these children may actually be an inability to keep their eyes properly focused on their books or other deskwork. These children become easily distracted and may appear to be hyperactive.

Q5: What evidence is there that supports the use of vision therapy?

A: Vision therapy has been successfully used in the of vision problems for more than 70 years. The College of Optometrists in Vision Development maintains an archive of published research articles and clinical studies on the effectiveness of vision therapy. In addition, thousands of patients each year who experience the benefits of vision therapy can attest to its positive impact on their lives.

Q6: Why is vision therapy provided mostly by optometrists rather than ophthalmologists?

A: Traditionally, optometrists have concentrated upon the functional and mental processes involved in good vision (eye tracking, eye teaming, binocular vision, visual-motor integration, visual perception), while ophthalmologists have concentrated on the physical nature of the eye (eye disease and surgical treatment). Although vision therapy has its early roots in ophthalmological procedures for the treatment of crossed-eyes (strabismus) and lazy eye (amblyopia) called orthoptics, its use for the treatment of other forms of binocular vision disorders and visual perceptual problems has largely been developed and provided by optometrists.

Q7: What is COVD and its mission for children?

A: The College of Optometrists in Vision Development (COVD) is the organization that educates, evaluates and board optometrists in the practice of comprehensive developmental and vision and vision therapy. Members of COVD consist of developmental optometrists who've undergone additional specialized education after completing their graduate level professional in optometry.

The mission of COVD is to serve as an advocate for comprehensive vision care emphasizing a developmental and behavioral approach. Our goals are to ensure that children receive the comprehensive vision care needed to evaluate and diagnose Learning-Related Vision Problems and to provide the necessary treatment with vision therapy to help them achieve their full potential. We believe that no child should be left behind because of a vision problem that interferes with his or her ability to learn.

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