

Dyslexia

The following is a list of some commonly asked questions and information regarding dyslexia:

What is dyslexia?

When a person has difficulties with reading, writing, spelling and maybe even speaking, no matter how hard he or she tries, the problem could be a learning deficit known as dyslexia. It is a life-long language processing disorder that hinders the development of oral and written language skills. Children and adults with dyslexia can be highly intelligent, however they have a neurological disorder that causes the brain to process and interpret information differently.

What are the effects of dyslexia?

Dyslexia can have different effects on different people, depending on the severity of the learning disability. Some children show few signs of difficulty in early reading and writing, but have more trouble later with complex language skills, such as grammar, reading comprehension, and more in-depth writing.

Dyslexia can also make it difficult for people to express themselves clearly. It can be challenging for them to use vocabulary and to structure their thoughts during conversation. Others struggle to understand when people speak to them, not because they don't hear, but because of their difficulty processing verbal information. This is

particularly true with abstract thoughts and non-literal language, such as idiomatic expressions and jokes.

Dyslexia can therefore have negative ramifications for one's self-image. Without help, children often get frustrated with learning.

Is dyslexia common?

Yes! According to the National Institute of Health, up to 15% of the population has significant difficulty learning to read. It occurs among people of all ethnic and economic backgrounds and people are born with dyslexia.

What are the warning signs?

The following are common signs of dyslexia in people of all ages, **but that does not mean that a person displaying these signs necessarily have a learning disability.** These could be divided into three levels of functioning: BEHAVIOURAL, COGNITIVE and BIOLOGICAL.

❖ BEHAVIOURAL

- Difficulty with reading and / or spelling
- Difficulty recalling lists of information - days, telephone numbers, etc.
- Sequencing problems - placing events in the correct order
- Clumsiness / organisation of information and materials
- Letter / Sound Association
- Poor time management skills
- Poor self-esteem as a result

❖ COGNITIVE

- Weakness in ability to process sound, e.g., breaking words into phonemes (smallest sounds within words)
- Difficulties in retaining strings of sounds or letters in short-term memory
- Heritability - 50% father to son and 40% mother to son (What is inherited is not reading disability per se, but aspects of language processing.)
- Difficulty with object naming
- Poor knowledge of letters and nursery rhymes at a young age

❖ BIOLOGICAL

- Requires extra time to acquire a new skill
- Deficits in working memory, speed of processing, motor skills and balance, and in the estimation of time - all of which are connected to the cerebellar activity. It is the left hemisphere of the brain which deals with handwriting, language, phonics, reading, following directions and listening.

Useful Websites for additional information:

- ✓ www.aclid-dyslexia.com
- ✓ www.bda-dyslexia.org/uk
- ✓ www.dyslexiaonline.com
- ✓ www.interdys.com
- ✓ www.nimh.nih.gov
- ✓ www.Idonline.org

✓ www.dyslexia-advice.com

How can I help my child with spelling?

Encourage children to:

- *look closely at words*
- *try new words*
- *visit the library*
- *proofread*
- *engage in spare time reading*

Parents can also play simple household games with their children such as Hangman/Scrabble. Another idea would be to purchase books of interest to children as an alternative treat to games and respect children's mistakes, for example, *purpus* for *purpose*.

Reading and writing are fundamental skills for daily living, however it is important to emphasise other aspects of learning and expression.

Although spelling is an important writing convention and it facilitates communication, it is not the most important trait in an individual's overall development through life.

To conclude on a lighter note, take a look at this poem - although the poem is made up of nonsense vocabulary, it can still be decoded!

*Eye have a spelling chequer
It came with my pea sea
It plainly marques for my revue
Miss Steaks eye kin knot sea.*

*Eye strike a quay and type a word
And weight for it to say
Weather eye am wrong oar write
It shows me write a weigh.*

*As soon as a miss steak is maid
It nose bee fore two long
And eye can put the error rite
It's rare lea ever wrong!*

*Eye have run this poem threw it
I am shore your pleased to no
It's letter perfect awl the weigh
My chequer told me sew!*