



Dyslexia



What is dyslexia?

Dyslexia is a specific learning disorder with impairment in reading. It is often characterised by difficulties in one or more areas of reading, spelling and writing. Some of the accompanying weaknesses may include difficulties in language acquisition, phonological processing, working memory, sequencing and organisation,

visual perception and motor skills. These difficulties could lead to a gap between a child's potential for learning and his or her academic achievement.

According to the Dyslexia Association of Singapore, 4% to 10% of the world's population has dyslexia.

What are the causes of dyslexia?

The exact causes of dyslexia are not completely clear but it is commonly explained as a difference in the way the brain processes language-based information.

Dyslexia is not an intellectual disability and many individuals with dyslexia have average to above average intelligence. It is also not the result of poor motivation, emotional disturbance, sensory impairment or lack of opportunities but it may occur alongside any of these.



What are the symptoms of dyslexia?

Difficulties in acquiring and using language, reading, spelling and writing letters in the wrong order is just one manifestation of dyslexia and does not occur in all cases. Examples of other problems experienced by children with dyslexia include:

- Difficulty learning the names of letters or sounds in the alphabet
- Difficulty in identifying and/or discriminating sounds in words
- Confusion with similar letters such as "b" and "d", "p" and "q"
- Confusion of words that look alike such as "on" and "no", "was" and "saw", "there" and "three"
- Poor reading accuracy and fluency
- Poor reading comprehension

It is important to note that not all children who have difficulties with the above weaknesses have dyslexia. A child with dyslexia usually has several of these characteristics which persist over time and interfere with learning. Formal testing is the only way to confirm a diagnosis of suspected dyslexia.

What are the treatment options?

Early identification and treatment are key to helping children with dyslexia achieve success in school and in life.

Treatment for dyslexia consists of using educational tools to enhance the ability to read and/or write. Children with dyslexia can be taught by a method that involves several senses (hearing, seeing and

touching) at the same time or what we call a multi-sensory approach.

Formal dyslexia assessment can be done after a child is 6 to 7 years old. Younger children who appear to be at risk for dyslexia can be enrolled in reading programmes before a formal assessment is done.

Tips

It is important to remember that all children learn differently and at different rates.

You will need to understand your child's strengths and weaknesses, rate of learning and interests in order to help your child be successful in overcoming or coping with his or her difficulties.

The following are some ways that you can help your child with dyslexia develop reading skills and boost self-esteem.

1. Be a good reading role model

Show your child how important reading is in daily life. Know your child's interests and make books, magazines and other reading materials available for him or her to explore and enjoy independently.

2. Share in the joy of reading

Reading with and to your child can make a positive difference in learning basic reading skills. Find time to read to your child every day.

- Find books that you and your child can read and enjoy. Sit together, take turns reading and encourage discussion.
- Point to the words as you read. Draw attention to words that you encounter in daily life such as traffic signs, notices and labels.
- Revisiting words that cause trouble for your child and rereading stories are powerful strategies to reinforce learning.

3. Engage as many senses as possible when teaching your child

Children with dyslexia learn better through a multi-sensory approach. Involve their sight, smell and/or touch during the learning process.

4. Focus on phonemes (i.e. sounds associated with letters in the alphabet)

Play rhyming games, sing songs that emphasise rhyme and alliteration, play word games, sound out letters and point out similarities in words.

5. Work on spelling

Point out new words, play spelling games and encourage your child to write.

6. Provide a positive and supportive learning environment for your child

Praise and/or reward effort rather than achievement. Set your child up for success by working with your child to set attainable achievement goals in the areas of reading and writing and provide the necessary support for your child to achieve them.



NUH Child Development Unit

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