

# Learning Disabilities

## WHAT IS A LEARNING DISABILITY (LD)?

A learning disability is a lifelong condition which interferes with the ability to learn. It is a neurological disorder that affects the ability of the brain to process, store and respond to information. There are different types of learning disabilities that can affect different areas of processing, such as learning to read, reading comprehension, writing and spelling, organizing written and spoken language, mathematical operations, decision making, and the development of fine motor skills. Individuals with LD may be particularly gifted in other skills and are typically of normal intelligence.

## HOW COMMON IS LD?

LD may affect up to 15-20% of the population; of those affected, approximately 85% have dyslexia (language-based learning disability).

## WHO IS MOST LIKELY TO HAVE A LD?

LD affects people of all backgrounds and intelligence, regardless of gender, race, or intelligence. Dyslexia may be familial.

## HOW IS LD DIAGNOSED?

Diagnosis of LD is based on a formal evaluation of intellectual ability, informational processing, and linguistic processing. Recent neurological research in dyslexic patients has shown that there may be neuro-anatomical abnormalities, which could interfere with both the acquisition and processing of written and spoken language.

## WHAT ROLE DOES VISION PLAY IN LD?

Visual abnormalities have not been found to affect the brain's ability to process visual stimuli and children with LD have no increased incidence of ophthalmologic disease. Ophthalmologic consultation should be provided to children who fail vision screening tests. This allows for diagnosis and therapy of treatable ocular conditions such as refractive errors and eye muscle imbalances.



## HOW IS LD TREATED?

Most schools will conduct a special education evaluation to see if your child has a learning disability if the request is submitted in writing. Treatment involves academic modifications to help the affected child succeed. Often this requires individualized tutoring, multisensory teaching techniques, and maximizing academic strengths. It is important to talk to your school about Individualized Education Programs (IEP) or 504-Plans. As there are many types of learning disabilities, there is no specific type of treatment plan and each child must be considered individually. The parent and school should regularly revisit and re-assess the child's learning accommodations to see what is working, what isn't and what should be changed. There is no scientific evidence to suggest that vision training, orthoptic exercises, visual perceptual training, or colored spectacle lenses improve academic performance in children with LD. Keep in mind that LD cannot be "cured" and it won't go away with time. Nevertheless, your child can learn how to lessen the impact of LD with research-based interventions, therapies, and accommodations.

## HOW CAN I FIND OUT MORE?

There are many organizations and websites that can provide information, discussion groups, and links to other relevant sites. Here are a few examples:

- Learning Disabilities, Dyslexia, and Vision
  - The official joint policy statement (2009) for learning disabilities, dyslexia, and vision of the American Academy of Pediatrics, the American Association for Pediatric Ophthalmology and Strabismus, and the American Academy of Ophthalmology; the policy statement (2001) of the American Academy of Ophthalmology regarding vision therapy for learning disabilities.
  - - [VIEW 2009 Policy Statement »](#)
    - [VIEW 2001 Policy Statement »](#)
- [The International Dyslexia Association](#)
- [Great Schools](#) - An information website for parents and children with learning disabilities.
  - [National Center for Learning Disabilities](#)

More technical information may be found on the [EyeWiki Site](#).



**Updated 12/2020**