

Wellness Articles

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If you would like to be added to the distribution list for these articles, please email: Rebecca.johnson2@albertahealthservices.ca. You will receive a monthly email containing articles for the upcoming four weeks.

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Proposed publication date: Oct. 9, 2023

Content provided by: Alberta Health Services

What is dyslexia?

October is Dyslexia Awareness Month.

Dyslexia is a specific learning disorder in reading. It means a person has difficulty reading, recognizing, and understanding words.

Having dyslexia doesn't mean that you or your child's ability to learn is the problem. It means that you learn in a different way. Not being able to read easily can make many areas of learning harder.

What causes it?

Experts don't know for sure what causes dyslexia. But it often runs in families. Learning issues can also develop after a brain injury.

What are the symptoms?

Signs of dyslexia may include:

- Difficulty reading or sounding out words.
- Having a hard time with spelling or writing.
- Reading slower than what is expected at your child's age.
- Difficulty remembering number facts.

After a child starts school, signs of dyslexia include:

- Problems reading single words, such as a word on a flash card.
- Trouble sounding out words.
- Understanding better if someone reads to them, rather than reading the material themselves.
- Having to read something many times to understand it.
- Losing their place when they read or skipping words.
- Problems linking letters with sounds.

- Confusing small words, such as "at" and "to."

Dyslexia is not caused by vision problems or other conditions.

How is it diagnosed?

A doctor or school professional may ask you and your child's teachers what signs of dyslexia you've noticed. An educational evaluation can be done through your school. Another option is to have a psychologist do an assessment to look at how your child thinks and learns. This can happen through your school, at a health clinic, or in the community.

How is dyslexia treated?

Dyslexia will never fully go away, but early treatment during childhood can help. Support from family, teachers, and friends is also important.

The first step is to talk with your school to find the areas that are difficult for your child. An assessment by a psychologist can look at how your child learns, which can help in creating a learning plan for your child's needs.

Help your child

Children who have dyslexia may need emotional support for challenges they face. Here are some ways parents and caregivers can offer encouragement.

- Learn about dyslexia. Learning more can help you better understand and help your child.
- Recognize and teach to your child's areas of strength. For example, if a child understands more when listening, let the child learn new information by listening to an audiobook. If you can, follow up with the same story in written form. Text-to-speech applications on tablets or computers can also support learning.
- Encourage your child to keep trying. There may be things they will struggle with. Help them understand that struggles can lead to success.
- Help your child learn how to cope with school. Your child may need to learn how to manage their schedule, organize work, and complete multiple assignments and long-term projects.
- Consider counselling if your child needs more support. If you think your child has self-esteem problems related to dyslexia, counselling may help.