

Doc Talk



By Dr. Veronica Naudin

Could it be Dyslexia?

My child is having trouble with reading. How can I tell if he has dyslexia?

Now that school is in full session, everyone is focused on our children's performance in school. Every parent hopes that their child will do well academically and socially in school. Often, the two are tied together and children are picked on when they seem to be "slower" than their peers. While many people have heard of dyslexia, it remains poorly understood. Many people think that children with dyslexia have trouble with writing letters and numbers backwards. We know that the problem is much more complicated than that and that children and adults with dyslexia have trouble processing numbers and letters in the brain. However, as our understanding of dyslexia improves, we are also learning the many ways that children with dyslexia can be helped.

If you are worried about your child's progress in reading, you should look for the signs of dyslexia. Children with dyslexia often display signs in preschool. The early signs include an inability to rhyme, failure to recognize letters in his or her name and have difficulty in remembering names of letters. At age 6-7, children with dyslexia may still have difficulty with common one-syllable words and complain that reading is too hard. Older children will mispronounce long or complicated words, confuse words that sound alike, have trouble memorizing dates, names and telephone numbers and guess wildly when reading multisyllable words instead of sounding them out.

What can you do if you suspect your child has dyslexia?

Talk to your child's teacher. Many teachers have experience with dyslexia or have resources to help you. In addition, your child's teacher may be able to give you some insight as to how your child is doing in the classroom setting. He/she may also give you some reading resources and ways to encourage your child to read at home.

Get tested. Every school has a special education resource specialist. You may contact the specialist and request special testing to determine if your child has dyslexia or another learning disability. In addition, you may have coverage for this testing

through your health plan. Call your health plan to obtain psychological services and testing for learning disability. You may also call the International Dyslexia Association @ 1-800-A-D123 for more resources.

Create an IEP. An IEP is an individualized education plan for your child. Every parent has the right to request an IEP for his or her child. In fact, your teacher or physician may not request it. The request must come from a parent. Public schools are required by law to ensure that every child has an appropriate learning environment. If you believe your child may qualify for special help and/or resources, you must request an IEP from your school.

Get at home help. Consider tutors and learning centers. There are many public and private services available. You can decide which type will best meet your child's needs. Also you may try computer programs specialized for reading. Look for programs that emphasize and reinforce phonemic awareness such as *Away We Go* or *Read, Write and Type*.

Keep in mind that dyslexia is not a disease. There is no medicine or cure for this learning disability. It is an inherited condition, which means that someone in the family has experience with dyslexia. Many children with dyslexia have above average intelligence. Hence, early diagnosis and appropriate learning tools will greatly enhance a dyslexic child's education. Many adults with dyslexia feel their dyslexia is a gift because it taught them to problem solve and become more creative. If you have any further questions about your child's learning issues, please discuss them with your child's pediatrician.

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Dr. Jorge Castro, Dr., Veronica Naudin, Dr. Stanley Ambo, and Dr. Paul Parker are dedicated to providing you with the quality health care that you desire for your children.

Please send questions and/or suggestions to:

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