



## **Dyslexia**

*Dyslexia is a common learning difficulty that can cause problems with reading, writing and spelling. It's a specific learning difficulty, which means it causes problems with certain abilities used for learning, such as reading and writing.*

**(NHS, 2020)**

## **What are the effects of dyslexia?**

“Dyslexia can affect people differently. This depends, in part, upon the severity of the learning disability and the success of alternate learning methods. Some with dyslexia can have trouble with reading and spelling, while others struggle to write, or to tell left from right. Some children show few signs of difficulty with early reading and writing. But later on they may have trouble 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 hard for them to use vocabulary and to structure their thoughts during conversation. Others struggle to understand when people speak to them. This is not due to hearing problems. Instead it is from trouble processing verbal information. It becomes even harder with abstract thoughts and nonliteral language, such as jokes and proverbs. All of these effects can have a big impact on a person's self-image. Without help, children often get frustrated with learning. The stress of dealing with schoolwork often makes children with dyslexia lose the motivation to continue and overcome the hurdles they face. It is important to note that with the proper support, almost all people with dyslexia can become good readers and writers.”

(National Centre for Learning Disabilities, 2020)

## **What are some of the signs of dyslexia?**

### Young children have trouble with:

- Recognizing letters, matching letters to sounds and blending sounds into speech
- Pronouncing words, for example saying “mawn lower” instead of “lawn mower”
- Learning and correctly using new vocabulary words
- Learning the alphabet, numbers, and days of the week or similar common word sequences
- Rhyming

### School-age children have trouble with:

- Mastering the rules of spelling
- Remembering facts and numbers
- Handwriting or with gripping a pencil
- Learning and understanding new skills; instead, relying heavily on memorization
- Reading and spelling, such as reversing letters (d, b) or moving letters around (left, felt)
- Following a sequence of directions
- Trouble with word problems in maths

## How can you support your child?

### Spelling:

- Help your child to understand words are made up of syllables and each syllable has a vowel sound.
- Say a word and ask how many syllables there are.
- Help your child to spell each syllable at a time.
- Write words in different coloured pens to make a rainbow or in shaving foam, flour or sand over and over again to help your child remember them.
- Look with your child at the bits in the words which they find difficult - use colours to highlight just the tricky bit.
- Look for the prefixes and suffixes in words, e.g. -tion, -ness and learn these chunks. Explore with your child how many words have the same chunks at the beginning or the end of words.
- Use flashcards or play matching games to let your child see the words lots of times - the more times they see the word, the better they will be able to read and spell it.
- Use cut out or magnetic letters to build words together, then mix up the letters and rebuild the word together.
- Use mnemonics - silly sentences where the first letter of each word makes up the word to be spelled.
- Find smaller words in the bigger word, for example 'there is a hen in when'
- Go over the rules of spelling together, e.g. a 'q' is always followed by a 'u'.

(British Dyslexia Foundation, 2020)

### Reading:

- Paired reading is a good way to help your child to read and enjoy books.
- Allow your child to choose a book they want to read and let them start reading. When they make a mistake give your child a few seconds to have a go, but then say the word yourself - this keeps the flow going.
- If the book is too hard for your child, read the words together.
- Read at your child's pace. Let your child decide on a signal they can give you when they want to carry on reading on their own. If they make a mistake, say the word and then carry on reading together. You can switch from reading together to your child reading alone. Try to do this for 10 minutes every day - share the book together rather than 'hear' your child read.
- At the end of a page or section, talk about what you've read together. Ask what might happen next and whether it reminds your child of another story or film.

(British Dyslexia Foundation, 2020)

### Handwriting

- Keep to short timed sessions so your child is able to maintain concentration without becoming bored or uncomfortable.
- Make sure your child is sitting comfortably when they write, with their feet firmly on the floor. If it's helpful, try using a slanted writing surface.
- Help your child to learn to grip the pen/pencil properly using the tripod grip. This allows the fingers and wrist to move freely without putting pressure on the hand.
- Help your child strengthen the muscles in their hand by using play dough or performing hand exercises.

- It's recommended that children learn to write using continuous cursive handwriting so they don't have to learn how to form letters twice when they need to write more quickly later on.

(British Dyslexia Foundation, 2020)

**References:**

- The National Centre for Learning Disabilities, 2020
- British Dyslexia Association - <http://www.bdadyslexia.org.uk/> 2020
- NHS website, 2020