

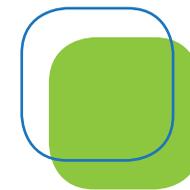
Where To Get Help

If your child has not yet seen a doctor and you suspect that he is showing signs of learning or behavioural or emotional difficulties, you may want to raise your concerns with your child's school counsellors. School counsellors are connected to our community mental health service, **REACH** (Response, Early intervention, Assessment in Community mental Health), which can provide further advice and assistance.

If your child is seeking help at our clinic, please raise your concerns with your child's doctor, nurse, or allied health professional.



LEARNING DIFFICULTIES



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WHAT ARE LEARNING DIFFICULTIES?

Learning difficulties are a category of disorders that affect how the brain processes information. Children with learning difficulties struggle to understand certain concepts and experience trouble learning in school despite having average to above-average intelligence.



The most common types of learning difficulties involve problems with reading, writing, mathematics, reasoning, listening and speaking. In school, where these skills are demanded of them, children with learning difficulties may feel frustrated and restless or lose focus during lessons. Behavioural problems, such as a lack of self-control or trouble interacting with people, do not in themselves constitute learning difficulties but may co-exist with them.

Here are some signs observed in children with learning difficulties:

- difficulty with the sequence and identification of letters of the alphabet
- confusion over letters and numerals that look alike
- trouble learning the connection between letters and sounds
- uneven spacing between written letters, words and symbols
- difficulty with or avoidance of tasks that require copying, writing, spelling, reading and reading aloud
- inability to understand what has been read
- ability to count aloud but not to write down the numerals
- trouble following classroom discussions and expressing thoughts aloud
- difficulty understanding simple instructions
- difficulty grasping concepts despite receiving additional help and support in school
- forgetfulness of what has been learnt
- difficulty completing homework

It is normal for most children to show one or more of these signs as they begin formal education. However, if these difficulties persist over time, your child may have learning difficulties.

What Causes Learning Difficulties?

Learning difficulties have no apparent cause, although genetics may play a part. A family history of learning difficulties increases the likelihood that your child will show symptoms of learning difficulties.



ASSESSMENT AND MANAGEMENT OF LEARNING DIFFICULTIES

To identify a learning difficulty, a comprehensive assessment will be conducted on your child. This includes tracking his or her developmental history and administering standardised cognitive and academic tests to determine strengths and areas of difficulty. Appropriate recommendations can then be made.

When teaching a child with learning difficulties, some effective strategies include:

- setting reasonable expectations
- focussing on the strengths of the child
- dividing up instructions and tasks into small steps
- providing regular breaks between tasks
- giving regular constructive feedback
- making use of multi-sensory approaches to learning, e.g. using videos, music, movement, actual objects, diagrams, graphics, colours and pictures to help explain concepts and facts
- modelling positive homework completion habits
- engaging your child with questions that encourage deeper thought, e.g. "How is that strategy working? Where else might you apply it?"
- encouraging an interest in reading through regular visits to the library, engaging your child in storytelling or reading to your child

