



WHAT IS VISION THERAPY?

Vision therapy can be thought of as physical therapy for the eyes. It strengthens the eye muscles and works on improving the overall visual efficiency of the patient.

Vision therapy is a personalized one on one treatment plan of eye-brain activities and exercises designed to eliminate or improve conditions such as amblyopia (lazy eye), strabismus (crossed or wandering eye), eye teaming (binocular vision), focusing and tracking disorders, and visual processing (perception) problems. It can also help with the treatment of post-concussion vision issues.

What are the signs that your child might need vision therapy?

- Holds book or paper too close or too far away
- Frequent eye rubbing during reading or homework
- Loses place or rereads lines when reading
- Omits or substitutes words
- Uses finger to read
- Avoids reading
- Crossed or drifting eye
- Squints or blinks often during reading

What are the symptoms?

- Headaches
- Eyestrain
- Tired, burning, or itchy eyes during reading
- Double vision
- Words move or run together when reading
- Words going in and out of focus
- Frequently loses their place or rereads the same line
- Blurry vision after reading for a long time



At what age can vision therapy begin for children?

Generally, eight years of age is appropriate for children to start vision therapy. At this age children have the attention and language skills necessary for vision therapy. No upper age limits exist as our brains have the flexibility to learn new things throughout our lives.

What causes children to need vision therapy?

The most common reason is **eye teaming**. Eye teaming (also known as binocular vision) is a visual skill that allows both eyes to work together in a precise and coordinated way. Eye teaming issues occur in about 5-10% of children.

Common eye teaming problems which affect reading and close work include problems with normal eye position, known as convergence. A dramatic form of an eye team problem is called **strabismus**. It is when an eye can be seen drifting or wandering.

Vergence issues are a common eye teaming deficit in children. Children will notice that words are swimming on the page or splitting into two while they read. In addition, parents might see their children frequently blinking, rubbing their eyes, or even closing an eye while they read. Children may get headaches if this issue is significant and not treated.

Convergence insufficiency is when the eyes have a strong tendency to turn out during reading and close work. Excessive effort must be used to keep the eyes from drifting out, and the effort involved causes double vision, headaches, and other symptoms.

Convergence excess is when the eyes have a strong tendency to turn in during reading and close work. The same symptoms as convergence insufficiency are seen with this problem.

Are there other eye problems that vision therapy can be used to treat?

Tracking and focusing issues are other issues children can experience in their day-to-day activities.

Tracking is a visual problem when a child struggles with coordinated eye movements. Our eyes need to move quickly and accurately to read or follow a moving target like a football or soccer ball. Parents might notice their child using their finger to read, rereading the same words, or skipping lines. In sports, parents may see their child has trouble passing or catching.

Focusing issues are problems with the internal focusing muscle of the eye, which is responsible for keeping things clear and in focus regardless of where a child is looking. Children with this issue may complain that words are going in and out of clarity, staying blurry, or never get clear. As a result, a child might experience frequent headaches, adjust the distance of their reading material, blink excessively, or rub their eyes.

How long do vision therapy sessions take?

The average vision therapy program is 45 minutes, with 5 to 6 activities used in supportive home therapy 5 times a week, for about 20 minutes. Sessions run for 12 to 16 weeks, with a follow-up in 3 months.

How effective is vision therapy?

Studies have shown that vision therapy strengthens connections in our brain, resulting in long-lasting changes. Studies have shown visual improvements after vision therapy were still intact one year after successful vision therapy.

What is vision therapy not used to treat?

Vision therapy is not for dyslexia, ADHD, learning disability, and reading disability. These are brain-based disorders that can mimic vision disorders.

