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Developmental reading disorder

Developmental reading disorder (DRD) is a reading disability that occurs when the brain does not properly recognize and process certain symbols.

It is also called dyslexia.

Causes

DRD occurs when there is a problem in areas of the brain that help interpret languages. It is not caused by vision problems. The disorder is an information processing problem. It does not interfere with thinking ability. Most people with DRD have normal or above-average intelligence.

DRD may appear with other problems. These can include developmental writing disorder and developmental arithmetic disorder.

The condition often runs in families.

Symptoms

A person with DRD may have trouble rhyming and separating sounds that make up spoken words. These abilities affect learning to read. A child's early reading skills are based on word recognition. That involves being able to separate out the sounds in words and match them with letters and groups of letters.

People with DRD have trouble connecting the sounds of language to the letters of words. This may also create problems in understanding sentences.

True dyslexia is much broader than simply confusing or transposing letters. For example, mistaking a "b" and a "d."

In general, symptoms of DRD may include problems with:

- Determining the meaning of a simple sentence
- Learning to recognize written words
- Rhyming words

Exams and Tests

It is important for your health care provider to check for other causes of learning and reading disabilities, such as:

- Emotional disorders
- Intellectual disability
- Brain diseases
- Certain cultural and education factors

Before diagnosing DRD, your provider will:

- Perform a complete medical exam, including a neurological exam.
- Ask questions about the person's developmental, social, and school performance.
- Ask if anyone else in the family has had dyslexia.

Psychoeducational testing and psychological assessment may be done.

Treatment

A different approach is needed for each person with DRD. An individual education plan should be considered for each child with the condition.

The following may be recommended:

- Extra learning assistance, called remedial instruction
- Private, individual tutoring
- Special day classes

Positive reinforcement is important. Many students with learning disabilities have poor self-esteem. Psychological counseling may be helpful.

Outlook (Prognosis)

Specialized help (called remedial instruction) can help improve reading and comprehension.

Possible Complications

DRD may lead to:

- Problems in school, including behavior problems
- Loss of self-esteem
- Reading problems that continue
- Problems with job performance

When to Contact a Medical Professional

Contact your provider if your child appears to be having trouble learning to read.

Prevention

Learning disorders tend to run in families. It is important to notice and recognize the warning signs. The earlier the disorder is discovered, the better the outcome.

Alternative Names

Dyslexia

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Updated by: Charles I. Schwartz, MD, FAAP, Clinical Assistant Professor of Pediatrics, Perelman School of Medicine at the University of Pennsylvania, General Pediatrician at PennCare for Kids, Phoenixville, PA. Also reviewed by David C. Dugdale, MD, Medical Director, Brenda Conaway, Editorial Director, and the A.D.A.M. Editorial team.

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