



LEARNING DISORDERS

If your child is struggling in school, it is possible that they have a learning disorder. A learning disorder (LD) usually involves difficulties in a specific area of learning, such as in math, reading, writing or sometimes in multiple areas.

Typically, your child is quite delayed in a specific skill or skills, and usually functioning 1-2 grades below their current grade level. Therefore, learning disorders usually aren't diagnosed until grade 3. Sometimes other conditions can look similar to learning disorders, such as ADHD or sleep disorders.

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How do you diagnose it?

Learning disorders (LD) can only be diagnosed by psychoeducational assessment, which is performed by psychologists. Often your teacher will recommend visiting a pediatrician to help rule out other conditions that can affect learning, such as sleep disorders, behavioural difficulties, or ADHD. For more information on the testing, please look at our handout Psychoeducational Assessment Info under the ADHD section.

My child has been diagnosed with a LD, what now?

The first step is to make sure that your child's school has a copy of the psychoeducational testing. The school will then work with you, your child, and the teacher to make an individual program/learning plan (IPP or ILP). Part of this will include ways the teacher can modify your child's learning goals so that they are successful. Modifications in learning at a young age will help ensure they learn the basic building blocks that they need as they advance through the years. There can be a variety of accommodations, such as more time for assignments/tests, sometimes a few less questions, and possibly a scribe or access to a laptop; it really depends on what your child is struggling with.

My child is too young to diagnose, what can I do?

It is common to recognize difficulties in early elementary years, when they are too young to be diagnosed with a LD. Sometimes the teacher will make some accommodations without a formal individual program/learning plan (IPP or ILP). Some of these children will catch up with extra supports, and some will go to be diagnosed with a LD.



Apart from school support, what else can be done?

Schools are the main place that children learn but learning should not stop with the end of school day! At home, you can also help your child by doing small amounts of extra work every day. Try to not make it seem like homework, but rather a part of the evening routine. This can include planned reading time, writing a story about their day, or practice sheets. Regardless of where they are struggling, reading is an important part of the bedtime routine. Talk to your child's teacher or the resource teacher at the school, about some suggestions that you can try at home.

Private tutors or tutoring agencies are also an option, however they can be expensive over time. You can look at your drug plan to see if you have any coverage to help pay for this. In some cases, it may be considered a CRA medical expense.

It is also important to make sure your child's brain has the proper supports to learn. This includes proper sleep, good nutrition, enough water, limiting screen time and daily exercise. For more information on these topics, take a look at our handouts under General Health and Nutrition & Health sections.

Resources

- School → Ask your child's teacher or resource teacher at the school
- Learning Disabilities Association of Alberta
www.ldalberta.ca
- Learning Disabilities Association of Canada
www.ldac-acta.ca/learn-more/ld-basics/understanding-learning-disabilities