

Further information

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Visual stress

Visual difficulties affecting reading ability

Information for you



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1. Visual stress due to visual perception difficulties

What are the symptoms?

If you suffer from this type of visual stress, you will have had symptoms throughout your life, and you may find it difficult to look at a page comfortably.

Here is a list of some of the common symptoms. Use this as a check list and ask yourself if you have any of these difficulties when reading.

- Glare or brightness from a page of print
- Headaches and/or sore eyes when reading
- Movement, jumble or blurring of print
- Tiredness when reading

Some people experience these symptoms after a minute of reading while others find that it takes longer. The severity of the symptoms also varies from person to person. The more noticeable the symptoms, the more difficult it will be for you to read.

This type of visual stress is more common in children and adults with specific reading difficulties, such as dyslexia. However, it is also thought to exist in a surprisingly large number

of normal readers. If severe, these symptoms may prevent an individual from reaching their maximum potential throughout education and employment.

2. Visual stress due to poor eye muscle control

What are the symptoms?

If you have poor control of your eyes, you may have difficulty when reading. The symptoms can occur at any age and will be associated with close work or reading. Here is a list of some of the common symptoms. Use this as a check list and ask yourself if you have any of these difficulties when reading.

- Headaches and/or sore eyes when reading
- Blurring of print
- Tiredness when reading

What should you do if you think you have visual stress?

If you have any of the symptoms listed in this leaflet, we would suggest that you have an eye examination by an Optometrist in your local optician practice. If you still experience any symptoms after this examination and any relevant treatment, you should be tested for visual stress. Visual stress can occur in people whose eyesight is otherwise normal.

What will happen if I need further assessment for visual stress?

The optometrist can refer you to your local Orthoptic Department. This is part of the eye clinic at University Hospital Crosshouse and University Hospital Ayr.

This clinic is dedicated to the assessment and treatment of children and adults with visual difficulties which affect their reading ability. It is essential that the correct diagnosis is made for your visual stress. The orthoptist is trained to identify and treat all types of visual stress.

What is the treatment for visual stress?

If you have been diagnosed with visual stress due to visual perception difficulties, the treatment is simple. A coloured sheet of plastic (overlay) placed over the print may help the symptoms. This can have a beneficial effect upon accuracy and comprehension when you are reading.

If you have been diagnosed with visual stress due to poor control of the eyes, exercises can have a beneficial effect on the symptoms.