

Is Your Student Struggling with Learning?

Many things related to a student's physical health can affect their ability to learn. Often, difficulty with learning can be attributed to conditions that can be corrected, treated, or managed. Research indicates that healthy students perform better on academic measures than unhealthy students¹. If you have a child that is suffering from a hearing problem, vision problem, or other physical limitations, they may have difficulty in learning things like spelling and reading². A student may also need a referral to special education for services to help them with learning.

Some specific physical conditions that can affect learning are listed below:

Sleep

Studies have shown that kids who regularly get an adequate amount of sleep have improved attention, behavior, learning, memory, and overall mental and physical health. Not getting enough sleep can lead to high blood pressure, obesity, and depression. Children ages 6-12 years old need between 9-12 hours of sleep each night³.



Activity

Exercise can increase the number of brain cells in the hippocampus, which controls the formation, retention and recall of memories – essential for learning. In most adults, the hippocampus starts to shrink in the late twenties, leading to memory loss over time⁴.



Vision Concerns

If your child is struggling with learning letters and reading words or other learning problems, different types of vision screenings may be available from the school nurse or from your child's primary health care provider. If your child receives a referral for an eye examination from the school nurse, then schedule the eye examination with an eye care professional (ophthalmologist or optometrist) and follow the eye doctor's suggestions⁶.



Chronic Health Conditions

An association exists between the child's health and academic achievement. Diseases such as diabetes, asthma, epilepsy, cancer, hemophilia, and congenital heart conditions can impact children's school attendance and achievement. Difficulties with these chronic conditions may have direct effects on learning⁵. For help with your child's chronic health condition please contact their health care provider.



Nutrition

Some children simply do not get enough to eat. When children do not consume enough food, it can affect a child's ability to learn. A healthy breakfast is an effective means to improve academic performance and cognitive functioning among undernourished kids⁵.



Hearing Issues

Hearing loss can affect a child's ability to develop speech, language, and social skills. The earlier children with hearing loss receive services, the more likely they are to reach their full potential. If you think that your child might have hearing loss, ask the child's doctor for a hearing screening as soon as possible⁷.



References

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³Dawkins, R. (2018). The importance of sleep for kids. Retrieved from <hopkinsallchildrens.org/ACH-News/General-News/The-importance-of-sleep-for-kids>

⁴Colorado Technical University (2018). 4 Reasons college students should make time for exercise. Retrieved from <https://www.coloradotech.edu/blog/2018/march/4-reasons-college-students-should-make-time-for-exercise>

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⁶National Center for Children's Vision and Eye Health: Prevent Blindness (n.d.). Association between vision and learning: Poor vision could lead to poor school performance. Retrieved from <https://nationalcenter.preventblindness.org/association-between-vision-and-learning/>

⁷Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2021). What is hearing loss in children? Retrieved from <https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/hearingloss/facts.html>