

FAQ ABOUT VISION THERAPY

What is vision therapy?

Vision therapy is an individualized treatment program prescribed to correct visual system deficiencies caused by stress, inadequate sensorimotor development, or trauma to the nervous system, all of which interfere with the ability to efficiently use the visual system. *Vision therapy teaches the brain how to use the eyes effectively to gather information, understand it quickly and react to it appropriately.*

What is involved in a vision therapy program?

A vision therapy program typically includes the use of special lenses, prisms or filters, in association with procedures designed to enhance the brain's ability to control eye alignment, eye movements, focusing ability and eye teamwork. High levels of visual-motor efficiency and endurance are developed during carefully monitored therapy sessions. The new skills are brought together and become automatic by repetition and integration with motor and cognitive skills.

Do vision therapy exercises simply strengthen eye muscles?

Nothing about vision therapy is centered on strengthening eye muscles. This therapy is all about improving vision problems that may interfere with learning by strengthening the neurological pathways between the eyes and the brain.

How long does vision therapy take?

The length of time required for completion of a vision therapy program, including the number of visits per week, the length of each visit and the amount of out-of-office therapy, varies. This is dependent upon the type of vision problem(s), how long the condition has existed, the motivation of the patient and the level of improvement desired. A typical program may take from a few months to a year.

Does my insurance cover vision therapy?

Some insurance policies do offer some coverage for vision therapy. While most insurance policies do not cover all of the costs, some may pay a portion of the cost. It is up to you to contact your insurance company to determine what coverage is available according to your policy.

What is the difference between eyesight and vision?

Eyesight is the physical process of detecting patterns of light and contrast with the eyes. It is the ability to see small objects at a given distance clearly. The accepted measurement is 20/20 visual acuity. *Vision* is the learned process that allows the brain to efficiently gather and use the information that is seen through the eyes. Vision provides the brain with an efficient channel for monitoring our attempts to move through, or change the environment. *Vision* includes skills such as eye tracking, eye teaming, focusing and perceptual relationships.

Can vision therapy help people with learning problems?

Yes! Vision therapy can be an important part of the overall treatment of a person's learning problem. Vision and sensorimotor deficits can cause eyestrain, headaches, blurred or double vision, reading problems, and attention difficulties. Even intelligent, highly motivated people can be severely handicapped by these problems in the academic or work environment. Correcting these deficits allows affected people to benefit from academic remediation and to achieve their full potential in the classroom and workplace.

Are computers used in Vision Therapy?

Yes! The computer has been a major advancement in the administration of vision therapy. The computer's unique properties have allowed us to add a number of interesting variations to the process of building visual skills. We use state of the art technology and software to sharpen visual recognition, memory skills, manipulation abilities and to develop efficient eye-hand coordination.

Can vision problems affect self-esteem?

Yes! People with vision problems often have a history of underachievement and frustration. They often conclude that the reason for their low achievement is that they are not as “smart” as other people. Low self-esteem and lack of confidence are often the result of this conclusion. Correcting the vision problems that interfere with normal performance can have dramatic effects on both performance and self-esteem.

How successful is vision therapy?

Vision therapy has proven to be an effective treatment for many problems that cannot be treated with eyeglasses or contact lenses alone. It can help people see more clearly, efficiently and comfortably. Much of the improvement depends on the patient’s willingness to follow the instructions. For patients who do so, significant progress toward more efficient and comfortable vision usually results.

How long do the results of vision therapy last?

Most healthy vision therapy patients enjoy long-term resolution of their visual problems. Using the newly acquired visual abilities in the activities of daily life allows these skills to become self-reinforcing. Efficient vision becomes a habit, as hard to break as any other habit. Some patients may need to perform a minimum level of maintenance therapy to sustain the high levels of visual performance attained during in-office therapy.

We've been told to take care of our child's other issues before vision. How do we know what to do first?

Once a child's vision has been assessed, any identified problems should be addressed as soon as possible. A small visual problem can actually present a huge barrier to success in treating other issues. In the past decade or so, neurologists have learned that over 70% of human neurology is primarily involved in vision. These neurological functions are for more than just identifying small letters on an eye chart, but also the brain connections that coordinate eye movements with hand and body movement; visual memory to recognize people, places, and words; interconnections between what we see and hear or touch; and neurological filters that we use to keep our attention on one thing while in the presence of various visual stimuli. When it comes to the classroom, effective visual function is even more crucial. Approximately 85% of classroom learning is related to vision. We often see children who have spent several years working on other issues, like reading remediation, occupational therapy, speech therapy, and writing programs. One thing these various treatments have in common: in order for them to be successful, vision must be well developed. When a child has been working on other issues but not making progress as expected, vision problems may be the culprit.

Why does my doctor say vision therapy doesn't work?

Not all doctors are created equal. There has been a considerable amount of mis-information regarding vision therapy spread among the medical community. Neuro behavioral rehabilitative optometry for brain injury patients has become more familiar to some doctors, but others refuse to embrace these similar techniques used in developmental cases. There are decades of research supporting the effectiveness of vision therapy for vision problems that interfere with reading, writing, and attention. Some doctors are simply not aware of these studies. If you're interested in reading the research, the College of Optometrists in Vision Development has compiled summaries of over 400 articles. www.covd.org. We also have literature that you can check out that would provide more information. Vision therapy is very similar to physical therapy and occupational therapy; but specifically programmed for the eyes and visual system.