

POSITION STATEMENT

Vision Therapy: Information for Health Care and Other Allied Professionals

American Academy of Optometry American Optometric Association

Many places place a premium on efficient vision. Schools and most occupations require increasing amounts of printed and computer information to be readed accurately and in shorter periods of time. Vision is also a major factor in sports, crafts and other pastimes. The efficiency of our visual system influences how we collect and process information. Repetitive demands on the visual system tend to create problems in susceptible people. Efficient vision may cause people to slow down, be less accurate, experience excessive fatigue, or make errors. When these types of eyes and symptoms appear, the person's conscious attention to the visual process is required. They may wear glasses with special lenses, and receive education of visual tasks. Many of these visual dysfunctionous are effectively treated with vision therapy.

PERTINENT ISSUES

Vision is a product of our inherent potential, our past experiences, and current information. Efficient visual functioning enables us to understand the world around us better and to guide our actions accurately and quickly. Age is not a deterrent to the achievement of successful vision therapy outcomes.

Vision is the dominant sense and is composed of three areas of function:

- Visual pathway integrity, including eye health, visual acuity, and refractive status.
- Visual skills, including accommodation (eye focusing), binocular vision (eye teaming), and eye movement (eye tracking).
- Visual information processing, including identification, discrimination, spatial awareness, and integration with other senses.

Learning to read and read for information require efficient visual abilities. The eyes must team precisely, move clearly, and track quickly and accurately across the page. These processes must be coordinated with the perceptual and memory aspects of vision. Vision is not most accurate with fingers. Processing for comprehension. To provide reliable information, this must occur with precise timing. Inefficient or poorly developed vision requires people to divide their attention between the task and the involved

visual abilities. Some people have symptoms such as headache, fatigue, eyestrain, errors, loss of place, and difficulty concentrating attention. Others may have no obvious symptoms because they avoid visually demanding tasks.

VISION THERAPY

The human visual system is complex. The problems that can develop in our visual system require a variety of treatment options. Many visual conditions can be treated effectively with spectacles or contact lenses; however, some are most effectively treated with vision therapy.

Vision therapy is a series of exercises individually prescribed and monitored by the doctor to develop efficient visual skills and processing. It is prescribed after a comprehensive eye examination has been performed and has indicated that vision therapy is an appropriate treatment option. The vision therapy program is based on the results of standardized tests, the needs of the patient, and the patient's signs and symptoms. The use of lenses, prisms, filters, occluders, specialized instruments, and computer programs is an integral part of vision therapy. Vision therapy is administered in the office under the guidance of the doctor. It requires a number of office visits and depending on the severity of the diagnosed condition, the length of the program typically ranges from several weeks to several months. Prescriptive parallelizing binocular exercises are typically taught to the patient to be practiced at home to reinforce the developing visual skills.

Research has demonstrated that vision therapy can be an effective treatment option for:

- Ocular motility dysfunctions (eye movement disorders)
- Non-strabismic binocular disorders (inaccurate eye teaming)
- Strabismic (misaligned) eyes (eye teaming)
- Amblyopia (poorly developed vision)
- Accommodative disorders (focusing problems)
- Visual information processing disorders (eye teaming, visual-motor integration and integration with other sensory modalities)

SUMMARY

Vision therapy is prescribed to treat diagnosed conditions of the visual system. Effective therapy requires visual skills to be developed until they are integrated with other systems and become automatic, enabling people to achieve their full potential. The goals of a prescribed vision therapy treatment regimen are to achieve desired visual performance, develop the visual system to meet the patient's needs, and improve the patient's quality of life.

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Clare J. Williams, O.D., Chair
 Susan A. Coates, O.D.
 Kelly A. Franz, O.D.
 Louis G. Hoffman, O.D., M.S.
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 Gloria L. Sackel, O.D.
 Jeffrey L. Zeman, O.D., M.S.

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