

**OPTOMETRISTS
CONTACT LENS PRACTITIONERS
BEHAVIOURAL OPTOMETRY
CHILDREN'S VISION**

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VISION THERAPY

Vision Therapy can be a very powerful tool for motivated people of all ages to improve and enhance their visual performance, but Vision Therapy can be particularly helpful for young children who are beginning or journeying along the academic road.

Often it is not until children begin to read that we first notice they have a visual problem. Because they are now using their visual system more intensively to tune in to small detail, the extra effort required can cause blurriness and discomfort with some children whose focusing skills are not yet fully robust or mature.

Sometimes training is necessary to help children to learn to use their eyes comfortably and effectively. Appropriate Vision Therapy exercises can help to improve co-ordination and control of eye alignment, eye movements (eye-tracking) and eye focusing.

Sometimes low powered focus-support glasses for reading and close work can be very helpful as an adjunctive 'short-term' support until focusing skills mature in young children.

But in order to read comfortably and with good comprehension, the visual system needs to perform several functions other than just making sure that the letters are clear. For example, visual memory is required for word recognition and 'board to book' copying. Visual discrimination skills, visual span, sequencing and visual spatial awareness all help to decipher and interpret a series of letters on a page. Visualization or being able to see 'in the mind's eye' is essential for reading comprehension and spelling.

Difficulty with early learning can be associated with weakness in any of these 'visual information processing' skills.

It is important for parents to realise that children with excellent clarity of eye-sight as measured on a letter chart can still have significant visually related learning difficulties.

At Strachan Eyecare we now have a number of home-based Vision Therapy programs designed for different visual problems. These include the HTS and Amblyopia inet computer-based programs for children and adults with 'visual efficiency' problems such as accommodative infacility, convergence insufficiency, esophoria and other eye-teaming problems.

Other programs are designed primarily to improve visual information processing. These include the 'Vision and Rapid Automatic Naming trainer' or VRANT program, the PTSII and 'Piggyback', whilst the 'Vision Builder' program includes activities aimed at addressing both visual efficiency and visual information processing difficulties.

For any Vision Therapy program to be effective, good motivation and compliance is ESSENTIAL. With young children, this means that an adult must be available to ensure daily practice is maintained, at least 5 times per week for best success for the duration of the program, which generally runs a course of between 6 weeks to 4 months, with regular 4 to 6 weekly in-office reviews.

Thus time and co-operation are ESSENTIAL in addition to good motivation and compliance for success with any Vision Therapy program.