

Specific Learning Disorder

Specific learning disorder is defined as a neurodevelopmental disorder characterized by ongoing problems with reading, writing, or math. Problems typically start and are diagnosed around school age, however, a diagnosis might not occur until adulthood.

Signs & Symptoms

Some symptoms of specific learning disorder appear in school age children, but individuals who have specific learning disorder have multiple symptoms that do not disappear as they grow older. Someone with specific learning disorder might have:

- A short attention span
- Poor memory skills
- An inability to discriminate among letters, numbers, or sounds
- A poor ability to read or write
- Trouble following directions

Causes & Risk Factors

There is no exact cause of specific learning disorder, but factors that can contribute to its development may be hereditary, or damage to the brain that occurs prenatally, during birth, or in early childhood. Risk factors for developing specific learning disorder include but are not limited to:

- Alcohol or drug use with a fetus in the womb
- Poor nutrition as an infant and young child
- Exposure to lead in water or paint
- Children not receiving the support needed for proper intellectual development

Diagnosis & Treatment

Specific learning disorder can only be diagnosed after a formal education begins. To be diagnosed, the individual has to have difficulties with reading, writing, or math for at least six months and start during school age, have academic skills that are significantly below average which cause problems in everyday life, and the impairment cannot be due to other conditions. Specific learning disorder is a lifelong challenge that cannot be cured or fixed. However, with proper support and interventions such as tutoring or special education services, individuals with specific learning disorder can be successful in school, at work, in relationships, and throughout everyday life.

Source – American Psychiatric Association (APA) For more information visit: <https://www.psychiatry.org/patients-families/specific-learning-disorder/what-is-specific-learning-disorder> and National Institute of Health: <https://www.nichd.nih.gov/health/topics/learning/conditioninfo/causes>

