

Johnny and Jane can't read? Maybe they can't see

About 16 percent of children 5 to 12 years old have vision problems that can lead to reading disabilities, says American Optometric Association (AOA).

Even if a child is of average or above-average intelligence, the AOA says, reading comprehension problems can affect his or her classroom performance and lead the youngster to accept being labeled "slow" or "stupid."

As a result, a child may suffer from low self-esteem, depression or other psychological problems that could interfere with his or her ability to function effectively in society.

"Early detection through a professional eye exam is the best way to correct any visual deficiencies to prevent a vision-related learning problem."

Once diagnosed, some causes of these problems can be corrected by prescription eyewear. Vision therapy is another treatment program in which repetitive visual exercises are used to coordinate eye movement focusing ability.

Some indications that your child may have trouble seeing:

- Dislike and avoidance of close work;
- Short attention span or frequent daydreaming;
- Tilting the head to one side or closing one eye;
- Trouble finishing timed written assignments;
- Placing the head close to a book or desk when reading;
- Excessive blinking or rubbing

of eyes;

- Losing place while reading;
- Complaints of headache, nausea and dizziness; and,
- Blurred or double vision.

Since reading disabilities usually have multiple causes, parents, educators and eyecare specialists should work together to address a child's learning needs.

While most schools "screen" children to detect vision problems, school eye exams generally test only a child's visual acuity -- the ability to see objects clearly from 20 feet away. A child may pass such vision screening, but still have vision disorders that interfere with learning.

A child's reading comprehension can suffer if any of the following vision skills are impaired.

- Visual acuity -- The ability to clearly see letters of a certain size at a certain distance.
- Visual fixation -- The process by which the brain directs the eyes toward an object.
- Accommodation -- The process that adjusts eye focus as the distance from an object changes.
- Binocular fusion -- The brain's ability to form a single, unified image from information received from each eye. If the eyes are not properly aligned, double vision may result as the brain, to compensate for this condition, will often suppress the vision of one eye. This eye will then weaken with disuse, resulting in amblyopia, or "lazy eye."
- Convergence -- The brain's ability

to direct the eyes to move together or, when looking at a near object, to turn inward toward the nose.

• Stereopsis -- A function of proper binocular fusion, allowing a critical judgment of the relative distance between two objects.

• Field of vision--The area over which vision is possible. It includes central and peripheral vision,

which are necessary for optimal reading skills.

• Form perception -- The ability to process visual stimuli, which is crucial in the development of reading skills. Children use from perception to recognize and recall visual images as specific shapes.

If any of these visual skills is abnormal, it can hinder a child's reading ability.



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Don't let your diet let you down

Athletics is becoming increasingly competitive. More and more stress is being placed on how well you perform. To reach your highest potential, all body systems must be perfectly tuned. Nothing is more closely interlocked with your well-being and ability to perform than good nutrition.

Eating the right foods helps you maintain desirable body weight, stay physically fit, and establish optimum nerve-muscle reflexes. Without proper nourishment, accomplishments achieved by physical conditioning and expert coaching can be limited. Good nutrition should be an integral part of your training program.

"Miracle foods" do exist. All individual foods lack some of the nutrients needed for good health. Certain foods supply mainly proteins, others vitamins and minerals, and so on. The key to balancing the diet is combining different foods so that nutrient deficiencies in some foods are made up by nutrient surpluses in others. Eating the proper variety at each meal is the secret.

The nutrients--the proteins, carbohydrates, fats, vitamins, minerals, and water--are teammates that work together to provide good nutrition. Just as each team member carries out different tasks during a game, each nutrient performs specific functions in your body. A lack of just one nutrient is a disadvantage to your body just as losing a player to the penalty box is to a hockey team. Studies suggest that these nutrients should be supplied by each meal in correct amounts and proportions for peak body condition.

Just because your appetite has been satisfied does not necessarily mean that your body has all the nutrients it needs. You can fill up on foods that contain mostly carbohydrates and fats, but your body still has basic needs for proteins, minerals, and vitamins.

Eating practice everyday!

The training period offers you an excellent opportunity to establish sound eating practices that not only will benefit you on the playing field but also will give you a measure of well-being throughout life.

Additional aids to good nutrition

Eat regularly. Breakfast is especially important because you need food to start the day. Your body begins the day in a low-energy, fasted condition. Teens who eat breakfast score higher on physical fitness tests. Breakfasts can be made up of any combination of foods from the four food groups. Spaghetti and meatballs, together with an orange and a glass of milk, is a nutritionally adequate meal for any time of the day -- even breakfast!

Make snacks count. Choose

snacks that contain more than just calories. When you eat out with friends, choose something nutritionally sound, like a cheeseburger with a slice of tomato and lettuce leaf. How many food groups are present in this sandwich?

Check your diet frequently. Spot check your daily diet at least once a week. Is your diet giving you an even break? Are you eating at least the minimum number of servings from each food group each day? Look for extra food energy. The teenage athlete burns up more calories than nonathletic friends do. You can fill this requirement by eating more food from all four food groups. Carbohydrates are the most efficient fuel for your body during strenuous exercise. Get most of your extra energy from foods like starchy vegetables and enriched breads and cereals instead of from fatty foods. For example, on an athlete's plate, a baked potato should get the nod over french fries.

Questions frequently asked by young athletes

Question. Do athletes have special nutrient needs?

Answer. Increased physical activity increases some of your food needs. You require more energy, water, and salt (sodium chloride). An athletic teenage boy may need 5,000 calories a day compared with the 3,000 calories required daily by his nonathletic friends. By taking extra servings of food from all four food groups (particularly starchy foods), you can fill this increased energy need.

Salt and water lost through sweating are not as easily replaced, especially if water intake is restricted during meets and practice sessions. Low water intake during strenuous exercise leads to dehydration, which causes fatigue and heat stroke. So replacement water should never be restricted during training sessions. If during increased physical activity you drink too much water too quickly, you may become "water logged," an unpleasant condition that you may have already experienced. Smaller amounts of water taken frequently during the activity avoid this problem.

Frequent use of isotonic sport drinks during periods of heavy sweating is a good way to maintain your body's supply of salt as well as water. Scientific studies show that water is absorbed more rapidly into your body when salt is present.

Salt needs can also be met by increased use of seasonings on foods. This method is preferred over the use of salt tablets.

Question. Are high-protein diets necessary for the high school athlete?

Answer. At one time it was believed that muscle-building exercise greatly increased dietary protein needs. This idea led to the

development of special high-protein meals and drinks for athletes. Nutritionists now agree, however, that your protein needs are not significantly greater than the needs of your nonathletic friends. These slightly increased protein needs can be met quite easily without using protein supplements or consuming high-protein diets. Increasing basic foods to meet your increased energy needs will supply more than enough protein.

Eating high protein diets may prove harmful. It may lead to loss of appetite, diarrhea, dehydration, and undue stress on the kidneys. Extra protein is also expensive.

Question. Does the athlete need vitamin or mineral supplements?

Answer. Opinions vary. Most nutritionists say that increased physical activity does not increase the body's needs for any vitamins.

All agree that the basis of good nutrition is a well-balanced diet and that vitamin supplements are no substitute for it. Excessive amounts of some vitamins (especially vitamins A and D) taken as supplements over a prolonged period of time have proved harmful, so depend on a well-balanced diet to supply all your vitamin needs.

Some think that the mineral potassium should be added to the athlete's diet. However, including potassium-rich foods such as oranges, bananas, and baked potatoes will supply adequate potassium. Potassium supplements are not necessary.

Iron deficiency can be a problem with some teenage women athletes, particularly during menstruation and for those athletes on diets. However, the female athlete should not self-prescribe iron supplements. She should question her family doctor about this potential problem and her individual need for iron. The doctor may prescribe an iron supplement after a clinical examination.

Question. What foods should the athlete eat before a game?

Answer. Before a game your digestive processes may be slowed down by your keyed-up emotional state. To combat this condition, you should eat an easily digestible meal no later than 3 hours before the contest. Avoid foods that contain substantial amounts of fats or oils. Fats are more slowly digested than other nutrients. Meals high in easily digestible carbohydrates are preferred.

Some athletes like poached eggs, toast, and juice as a light pregame meal. Others drink liquid meals (from a can) before games. These meals are convenient, particularly if you have to travel to a meet. Also the nutrients in these meals pass through the stomach rapidly and are quickly digested. However, liquid meals should be limited to pregame use. When used regularly,

they are not a good substitute for solid foods.

Question. Is glycogen or carbohydrate loading recommended for the high school athlete?

Answer. Carbohydrate loading is practiced by mature athletes who participate in endurance events such as long-distance running and swimming of long duration. A high-protein, high-fat, low-carbohydrate diet is eaten for a few days followed by a very high carbohydrate diet (for example pancakes, breads, rice, and noodles) two days before the event. This eating routine increases the body's stores of glycogen, a carbohydrate, in liver and muscle tissue. Thus, more carbohydrate is available for muscle energy during endurance events. The practice of carbohydrate loading should not be confused with a diet high in carbohydrate, which is recommended for all athletes, including the teenager.

Carbohydrate loading routines have not been thoroughly tested for the rapidly growing high school athlete. The disadvantages may outweigh the advantages. The effects on immature muscles are unknown. The practice may not increase endurance as it does with adult athletes. Most events that high school athletes participate in are not of sufficient duration to exhaust the normal levels of muscle glycogen. During the high-protein, high-fat phase of carbohydrate loading, performance is decreased and the athlete may feel exhausted. During the final phase, water is retained and weight is increased.

So glycogen or carbohydrate loading is probably not in the best interest of the young athlete.

Question. Should teen athletes try to reduce their weight to make special weight categories?

Answer. Moderate weight reduction over an extended period of time, together with a balanced diet to insure sufficient protein, vitamins, and minerals, may be necessary for some athletes to lose excess fat, which has been shown to limit performance. However, severe weight reduction or restriction of normal weight gain is not recommended. Starvation and dehydration during growth retards muscle development. Scientific studies show that performance is reduced when athletes who are in shape lose more than 3 percent of their body weight within a short period of time. Muscle is lost and strength is reduced.

Even more important, weight reduction may permanently stunt growth and muscle development. Lost muscle growth will not be restored later. So losing weight rapidly or restricting normal weight is not for you.

Teamwork creates successful 4-H clubs

Each member, parent, and leader contributes to the success of a 4-H club. Everyone in a club benefits from assuming some responsibilities.

Junior (4th-6th grade) 4-H members can: be a club officer (keeping duties simple); lead the pledge; teach a game; assist the leader during a program; contact a guest speaker; contact someone about a community service project; call members to remind them of a club meeting and more.

Intermediate and senior (7th-12th grade) 4-H members can: be a club officer (go over agenda before meeting and let the 4-H'ers take over); contact guest speakers; organize a community service project; teach sessions on records,

presentations, or subject matter; organize and run a club activity such as a judging contest; organize and run a game such as the 4-H bowl games; be a junior leader (7th-12th grade); be a teen leader (10th-12th grade); and more.

Parents can participate by: providing transportation for tours, assisting leader with project activities, organizing a club party, providing meeting space and more.

4-H leaders in a club can divide responsibilities for club activities such as: project work, records presentation, paper work, and more.

A successful 4-H club is a team effort. It takes lots of planning and time, but it's worth it. Each person has a lot to give and receive in a 4-H group.

Counselors Needed for 4-H

4-H Summer Week is the premiere 4-H event for Oregon older youth will be held on June 17-21, 1991, on the Oregon State University campus. 4-H Summer Week is open to 4-H members currently enrolled in grades 7-12.

Responsibilities:

- Supervision of Youth Conference delegates while housed in OSU residence halls. (Adult dorm coordinators will be available to assist.)
- Be responsible for one area of a residence hall and about 25 4-H delegates. Supervise wake-up and lights-out time.
- See that all 4-H delegates attend classes and evening programs. Help youth become familiar with the campus, building, and the location of activities.
- Be available as a counselor and friend to the 4-H delegates.
- Attend floor meetings for delegates and counselor staff meetings.

Qualifications:

- Must have completed one year of college, with preference given to older, experienced applicants.
- Must have an interest in older youth and helping them succeed.
- Must have the ability to respond and relate to older youth.
- Must have an ability to be flexible and assume a variety of assignments.
- Must have strong leadership skills & the ability to provide discipline under pressure.

Time Requirement:

- Be at OSU the Sunday afternoon before Summer Week through Friday noon.

Benefits:

- Counselors will receive \$75 compensation for their work during Summer Week and the \$120 Youth Conference registration fee will be waived. (Registration includes meals, lodging in residence hall, program costs, and insurance, and T-shirt.)
- Counselors will gain experience in leadership and working with youth.
- Counselors will receive training that will be valuable in working and living with others.

How to apply:

Call or write for application by January 9: The Department of 4-H and Youth Development, Oregon State University, Ballard Extension Hall 105, Corvallis, OR 97331-3608. Phone (503) 737-2421 or 737-1322.

New Years gardening resolution

The start of a new year is traditionally the time to promise yourself you'll do a better job of some particular task than you've done in the past.

Home gardeners looking for a good new year's resolution may want to resolve to use pesticides as safely and effectively as possible, says Ray McNeilan, Oregon State University (OSU) Extension home gardening agent.

"Safe pesticide use is usually synonymous with following label instructions for all garden chemicals employed in the home garden or landscape," says McNeilan.

Always read the pesticide label before each use of the chemical

and follow the directions given. If still in doubt after reading the label, contact a person qualified to give out information on safe pesticide use. County offices of the OSU Extension Service are good sources of information.

Most pesticides used around the home do not require the user to wear special protective clothing while applying the chemical. However, McNeilan recommends that homeowners using pesticides at least wear clothing that completely covers arms and legs. Gloves will keep any spray residues off hands.

After the application, wash the clothes separately from other laundry. Care must also be taken

when disposing of pesticides and pesticide containers. Never pour pesticide into a storm drain on a city street, or down a kitchen or bathroom sink in the house. Pesticide containers have disposal instructions on the container label for your convenience.

Remember that chemical answers to pest insect and weed problems aren't always the best answers. First identify the pest insect or weed and then evaluate how widespread the problem is, says McNeilan. A few pest insects can be ignored at no great risk to your garden plot, and a few weeds are better removed with a garden hoe than with a healthy dose of herbicide.

Cold and snow damage landscape plants

Those sad-looking landscape plants homeowners are seeing in their yards are a direct result of the recent cold weather and accompanying snow-fall.

Ray McNeilan, Oregon State

University (OSU) Extension home gardening agent, divides cold damage to plants into three major categories: 1) burst cells and ruptured bark; 2) desiccation (scorched leaves); and 3) ice and

snow breakage.

Burst cells or ruptured bark is the type of damage that occurs when the plant cell fluids freeze and rupture the cell wall, or tender bark is repeatedly frozen and thawed, says McNeilan. This may result in eventual splitting of the bark, which usually occurs when a plant is hit by extreme drops in temperature before it achieves full dormancy.

Another cause is long periods of cold, clear weather with wide variations in day and night temperatures. Warming during the day on the south and west sides of the plant followed at night by extreme cold can cause bark to

split and foliage to become scorched.

This scorching is called "frost burning." You can protect against this type of injury by mulching plants with 3 to 6 inches of a material that is coarse enough to drain well. Ruptured bark can often be avoided by draping the plant with burlap or shading the plant in some way during the day to prevent the alternate freezing and thawing.

Once plants get cold, it is less harmful to keep them cold rather than allow them to thaw during the day and freeze at night, McNeilan says.

Scorched leaf tips and margins (desiccation) are a common pro-

blem, particularly in broad-leaf evergreens. Dry cold winds are often the cause. The injured leaves will eventually drop. In most cases the plant will recover in the spring.

You can prevent ice and snow breakage by removing ice and

What kinds of toys would help my child become more active?

Toys that encourage activity are jump ropes, roller skates, hula hoops, bicycles, baseballs, mitts and bats, basketball hoops, frisbees, kites, and all other toys that get children to run, jump, and play actively. Records or cassettes of

set. Soon watching television and eating will become simultaneous activities. You don't want your child to get into the habit of eating every time he watches television.

Stick with bulge battle

Keep your swimsuit out all winter. Getting into it at least once a month and really looking at yourself--front and rear--in a full length mirror will help you stick with your bulge battle. Another good motivational device: Move your bathroom scale to the kitchen.

Water protected plants

Don't count on the winter rains to provide water to all plants in the home landscape, says Ray McNeilan, Oregon State University (OSU) Extension home gardening agent.

Many plants grow in areas protected from the rains. Plants beneath the wide eaves on many Oregon homes, for example, may be dry.

"Rain water doesn't fall into sheltered areas, so you may need to hook up the garden hose and give sheltered plants a watering," says McNeilan.

Although most landscape plants are dormant in the winter, they still use some water. In very cold winter weather, a well-watered plant has greater protection against freezing than a dry one.

snow from a plant before it builds up. Bent limbs may straighten out once the weight of snow and ice is removed. Give the plant a chance to recover before pruning out limbs and foliage.

dancing and marching music can help children enjoy the many movements they can do. None of these need to cost a lot. A large rubber ball may not look like a very exciting toy, but buy one and be pleasantly surprised at how much your child plays with it.