

## ACCOMMODATIVE DYSFUNCTION

### What is it?

The textbook definition for an Accommodative Dysfunction is:

*“A non-aging, non-refractive, neuromuscular abnormality of the visual system characterised by inadequate accommodative accuracy, facility and flexibility, reduced amplitude of accommodation or the inability to easily sustain accommodation”.*

In plain English this simply means that the individual has a problem sustaining prolonged near focus. This is **not eyesight or refractive error problem** but rather an acquired fatigue problem which produces eye strain and stress particularly with prolonged near work.

### WHAT CAUSES A FOCUSING PROBLEM?

There are **four possible reasons** for developing an Accommodative Dysfunction:

1. **Poor General Health** (E.g. Chronic Fatigue Syndrome, Glandular fever, bad flu etc.)
2. **A side effect of some medications.** (e.g. Ritalin, antihistamines, etc.)
3. Due to a **high degree of long-sightedness** or **Eye turn** (esp. Esotropia).
4. The most common reason is due to **Near Point Stress** due to prolonged near tasks.
  - Particularly if at an age where you have not yet developed good focusing stamina to cope with it.
  - This can even happen in the adult eye, especially if you are doing a stressful near centred task (eg new job involving more close work, study, prolonged computer work, fine sewing etc).

### SYMPTOMS:

The symptoms associated with focusing dysfunction are usually related to the task that produces the stress, that is, prolonged near centred tasks. The symptoms may include, but are not limited to the following:

- **Visual Stress Symptoms:** Red eyes, sore eyes, transient blurry vision and/or headaches.
- **Difficulty sustaining near visual attention :** may actually avoid near task.
- **Glare symptoms while doing close work.** (e.g. the page or computer screen)
- **Abnormal posture adaptations** such as head tilt and / or tend to pull the work closer.

### TREATMENT:

1. **Training Spectacle lenses for all close work.**

- The problem is not that things are constantly blurry. The problem is that the focusing system is working hard to keep it clear and this causes fatigue.
- The training lenses help alleviate or reduce the visual point stress.
- The more they are worn for near work the sooner better focusing stamina is developed, the sooner the spectacles are no longer needed.

## 2. Eye Exercises. (Visual Therapy)

- Visual Therapy on its own is slow to develop accommodative (focusing) stamina for the simple reason that for every half hour of therapy that might be done at night time, the child/adult has usually been doing 5 or 6 hours of “Anti-therapy” during the day (i.e. demanding close work causing accommodative fatigue).

### DURATION OF TREATMENT:

Generally the training lenses are needed to be worn for all close work including computer work, reading, classroom work etc. They are **not** for outdoors, TV or for constant wear.

**The Golden Rule: *If you can touch it with your hands you should have your training spectacles on to see it.***

- Most **need the training spectacles for 12 – 18 mths** before we can reduce or eliminate the need to wear them anymore.
- We will do a **6 week review** to ensure the training lenses are developing better accommodative stamina.
- If there is little or no change after this time **Visual Therapy will also be considered.**
- This is only needed in about 33% of cases.
- Visual Therapy requires between **4 to 6 In-Office visits (2-3 weeks apart)** along with home based activities been done between visits.
- **NB:** These are generalised guidelines and each case may need to be evaluated on the individual basis. Treatment duration will depend on the particular patient’s condition.

**Options for Visual Therapy:** Please see our separate information sheet.

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