

FACT SHEET



WHAT IS HYPERLEXIA?

Children with hyperlexia demonstrate an intense fascination with letters, numbers, patterns, and logos, and exhibit a self-taught, precocious ability to read, spell, write and/or compute, usually before the age of five. They have difficulty developing language and communication skills and often exhibit unusual behaviours or interests.

HYPERLEXIA IS A SYNDROME OBSERVED IN CHILDREN WHO HAVE THE FOLLOWING CHARACTERISTICS:

- a precocious ability to read words, far above what would be expected at their chronological age or an intense fascination with letters or numbers
- significant difficulty in understanding verbal language
- abnormal social skills, difficulty in socializing and interacting appropriately with people

In addition, some children who are hyperlexic may exhibit the following characteristics:

- learn expressive language in a peculiar way, echo or memorize the sentence structure
- rarely initiate conversations
- have an intense need to keep routines, difficulty with transitions, ritualistic behaviour
- have auditory, olfactory and/or tactile sensitivity
- exhibit specific, unusual fears
- have difficulty answering “Wh” questions, such as “what,” “where,” “who,” and “why”
- listen selectively, appear to be hearing impaired

HOW IS HYPERLEXIA IDENTIFIED?

Hyperlexia has characteristics similar to autism, behaviour disorders, language disorders, emotional disorders, Attention Deficit Disorder, hearing impairment, giftedness, or paradoxically, cognitive delay.

To develop effective teaching strategies and more typical childhood development, it is important to differentiate hyperlexia from other disorders. A speech-language pathologist who is familiar with hyperlexia is a crucial first step. Psychological tests which emphasize visual processes rather than verbal skills aid in identifying hyperlexia.



Early detection is vital! If you suspect a problem consult your yellow pages or visit our website to find a speech-language pathologist or audiologist near you.

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