



# XCELLENCE IN EYE CARE

## THE EYE INSTITUTE

### *Tracking Problems* *(Eye Movement Problems)*

#### **What is a tracking problem?**

In order to see properly, the eyes must move accurately, smoothly and quickly from word to word or from one target to another target. Every time a child looks from the board to a book, for instance, the eyes must accurately jump from one target to another. The same is true for reading.

An eye movement problem is present when a child's visual system has not developed as expected. Tracking, in such a case, is inaccurate, slow and may interfere with reading and school performance.

A child who has good decoding skills and a normal sight vocabulary may still experience problems when reading for comprehension. If so, a tracking problem is one possible factor that should be investigated.

#### **What types of tracking problems can occur?**

If the eye movement system is not functioning properly, the information received by the brain does not accurately represent the information in the book or on the board.

A good analogy is to compare the eyes to television cameras sending information to a television. The picture on the television is only as accurate as the cameraman moving the camera at the scene. In the case of the human visual system, the eyes are the cameras and the brain is the television station. The information received by the brain is only as accurate as the eye movements and tracking of the eyes.

#### **How common are tracking problems?**

Approximately five to ten percent of children and young adults have tracking problems which are significant enough to cause some of the complaints listed below.

#### **What are problems and symptoms associated with tracking problems?**

People that have tracking problems may complain of the following:

- Frequent loss of place when reading
- Skipping lines
- Trouble copying from the board
- Using a finger or guide when reading
- Normal decoding skills, but poor reading comprehension
- Short attention span

Tracking problems resulting in these symptoms actually have more of an impact on learning than vision problems, which cause a lack of clarity. Unfortunately, most school vision screenings are only designed to detect vision problems. Very few school screenings even test for tracking disorders.

## How are tracking problems treated?

Because eye movement problems are unrelated to the optic nerves within the eyes, the use of eyeglasses is often not an effective treatment approach. Rather, **Vision Therapy** must be used to treat eye movement disorders.

**Vision Therapy** is a treatment approach which involves weekly office visits. During these visits, carefully sequenced activities are practiced by the patient. This treatment is designed to develop accurate and efficient eye movements.

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