

The Child Brain Injury Trust is a national charity supporting anyone affected by childhood acquired brain injury. The following information has been developed to help the reader understand more about brain injury and some of the associated issues. Every effort has been taken to ensure the information is accurate and up to date. If you require more immediate support or assistance please contact our Helpline 0303 3032248 or email helpline@cbituk.org where we will be able to respond to your specific enquiry and or offer support.

Difficulties with Sight

The information about what we “see”, using our eyes, has to be processed by our brain to make an “image”. It is possible that a brain injury can affect what we see even if the injury has not affected the eyes.ⁱ

If difficulties with sight are not picked up during a child’s stay in hospital, it is likely that you as parents or guardians will be the first to notice. Your child may be:

- struggling to see out of the corner of the eye, above, or below when looking straight ahead, or vice versa
- finding it hard getting around furniture or objects and bumping into things
- falling or tripping over
- finding it difficult to reach out and grab items at a distance
- struggling to recognise faces, objects and places
- finding it hard to focus on nearby things
- struggling to follow a fast-moving object
- moving the head to see something when they would usually use just their eyes (such as reading from a book)

Some difficulties with sight can also be due to tiredness, concentration and the lighting within a room.ⁱⁱ

If you do have concerns talk to your GP or optician. If the difficulties are more complex than requiring a pair of glasses, you should look for a referral to a specialist, who can carry out further tests to determine the cause of visual difficulties.

Practical suggestions

If your child is experiencing difficulties with sight, there are a number of things that you can try:

- if your child wears prescription glasses, contact lenses or a visual aid, then make sure they use them
- try to increase the printed size of letters and spacing between words
- try to make sure that colours contrast so that words and even objects are more visible



- make sure the room your child is working in is brightly lit
- place reading books on a slant, toward your child, to assist with reading and improve reading speed
- encourage your child to read one line at a time by cutting out a 'letter box' shape from a piece of paper to put around the words that they are reading, or use a computer programme, such as ACE READER, which shows only one word of a sentence at a time (a free trial version can be downloaded from www.acereader.com – selecting 'Try')
- when reading, mark the next sentence on the right-hand side of the page with a piece of blu-tack so your child can find their way back to the start of the next line more quickly
- watch carefully to find out the smallest toy that your child can see and play with, and then encourage him or her to play only with toys of this size or larger. Placing one toy on a plain background will often help children to see it more easily
- find out what distance is best suited to your child in terms of recognising things, and then try to maintain this distance so that your child is able to process this information
- if your child is struggling to see something at a particular angle, try to place the object in the part of the child's vision that is working well
- try to keep things in the same place

There are several charities dedicated to sight problems who can offer more information and advice:

- Royal National Institute of Blind People: <http://www.rnib.org.uk/>
- Action for blind people: <http://www.afbp.org/>

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ⁱ Atabaki SM. Pediatric head injury. *Pediatr Rev.* 2007;28(6):215-224.

ⁱⁱ <http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/ency/article/000028.htm>