



# Kiwi Pediatrics

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## Learning Disorders

### What is a learning disorder?

Having a learning disorder means a child has a particular area of challenge with one or more aspects of learning. Many people are familiar with dyslexia (though this term is no longer commonly used) which is a learning disorder impacting the ability to read. Learning disorders can impact any area of learning like mathematics, writing or reading. Typically children with a learning disorder would be at least 1-2 years behind their grade level. They may also show a significant difference in their abilities across different subjects.

### How is a learning disorder diagnosed?

Learning disorders are difficult to diagnose in young children as some early areas of difficulty may improve given time. Generally the diagnosis can be made fairly reliably when children are in grade 3 or above. Diagnosis is made by a psychologist who performs a psychoeducational assessment. This is a group of standardized tests that explore all different aspects of learning and assess a child's abilities and function. Commonly, children will also be assessed by a pediatrician to rule out other conditions that could mimic learning disorders.

### How can I get my child assessed?

Psychoeducational assessments are sometimes performed by a child's school but unfortunately the number of children a given school can assess is quite limited. These assessments can also be pursued privately by a family and often cost between \$1500-\$3000 depending on the number of tests that need to be performed. Sometimes some of this cost may be offset but an extended health benefits plan through the parents' employer. There are a number of child psychologists in Calgary that offer this service.

### What are next steps once a diagnosis is made?

Providing a copy of the assessment to your child's school is an important first step. The information and recommendations provided by the psychologist can then be used to come up with a formal support plan to help your child meet their potential at school. There may be benefit in providing extra support to your child at home in their areas of difficulty. Your child's teacher is often the best resource about what activities would be most useful to support what they are working on at school.

Doing your best to support your child's general health can also make sure they are going to be able to best meet their potential at school. Working to make sure they are getting adequate sleep, proper nutrition, physical activity and time for free play (not on a screen) each day is important. Your pediatrician is a great resource if you have questions about supporting your child in these areas.

### Useful Websites

[Canlearnsociety.ca](http://Canlearnsociety.ca)

[LDalberta.ca](http://LDalberta.ca)