



Vision Support Team

Team for Children with Vision Loss

Visual Stress also known as Irlen Syndrome or Meares Irlen Syndrome

The information in this document is to support the understanding of the condition visual stress. It may also be known as Irlen Syndrome or Meares Irlen Syndrome.

What is the condition?

Visual stress - or (Meares) Irlen Syndrome is a form of visual or perceptual processing disorder. Someone with a visual or perceptual processing disorder has difficulty making sense of visual information. This is different from problems involving sight or vision. When an individual suffers from visual stress – or (Meares) Irlen Syndrome, their brain has difficulty processing certain wavelengths of light. In this way, light (especially bright and fluorescent lighting) becomes a stressor on the brain. This stress causes certain parts of the brain (e.g., the visual cortex) to become overactive. It is this over-activity and inability to effectively process visual stimuli that creates a variety of visual, physical, cognitive, emotional, and neurological symptoms.

Visual Stress – or (Meares) Irlen Syndrome is more often seen in CYP with ASC, ADHD, those with brain injury, those that suffer migraines, but it is not exclusively to those diagnoses, and can appear on its own.

Who diagnoses the condition?

Screenings are carried out by specialist Irlen® screeners. They will carry out a screening to identify symptoms and determine how symptoms are impacting upon daily life. Irlen Screeners are trained to determine whether an individual has a profile consistent with Irlen Syndrome or not and advise accordingly. Irlen® screeners may be based in community optometrists and sometimes within University Optometry departments.

Diagnosis is not carried out by hospital-based Ophthalmologists or Orthoptists.

Please note, the Vision Support Teams Qualified Teachers of Vision Impairment are not trained to carry out the assessments for the Irlen® screening.

What happens after diagnosis?

When a child/young person is diagnosed with Visual stress – or (Meares) Irlen Syndrome- the screener will determine which coloured tint helps to improve the symptoms the child/young person is experiencing. The child/young person will either be prescribed tinted glasses, or a coloured over-lay to use. Please note that the glasses prescribed are not covered by standard NHS prescriptions.

What other provision might the child/young person require?

- ✓ Reduced amounts/volume of text
- ✓ Changes in style/size of font
- ✓ 'reading rulers'
- ✓ Smaller amounts of reading at any one time
- ✓ Visual rest breaks

Please note the above list is not an exhaustive list, and there may be more given- these are a few examples.

If the child/young person continues to have difficulties with reading/writing-based tasks, where speed or processing are affected, then the school should seek further advice from either an Educational Psychologist (EP) or Pupil and School Support teacher (PSS).

Will the child/young person be referred to the Vision Support Team for further support?

The Vision Support Team (Qualified Teachers of Vision Impairment) only support children/young people that have a visual diagnosis that causes a vision impairment that has been diagnosed by an Ophthalmologist. As Visual Stress- (Meares) Irlen Syndrome *is not* diagnosed by an Ophthalmologist the Vision Support Team do not support around this condition.

For further, more detailed information

For further, more detailed information on (Meares) Irlen Syndrome, how it can affect a child/young person and activities and advice please visit the following websites (both UK based)

[What is Irlen Syndrome? | Irlen Syndrome Foundation](#)

[Home - Irlen UK](#)

Please note the font used in this information leaflet is called Verdana and is used because it is one of the most visually friendly fonts for people with vision difficulties and is also Dyslexia friendly too.

Further information for support for children and young people with vision loss can be found on the Birmingham Local Offer website:

[Sensory Support Vision - Local Offer Birmingham](#)