

EARLY DETECTION AND TREATMENT OF SPEECH AND LANGUAGE DISORDERS

Communication is central to everything we do. It affects who we are, how we learn and interact with other people at home, at school, and at work.

Children with good speech, language and communication skills find it easier to:-

- Learn in school
- Develop friendships
- Find employments as adults.

Communication development begins at birth, as babies communicate their needs through crying and facial expression. As they get older, children develop friendships with other children through talking and playing together. They learn about their world by listening to other children and adults and by talking about what they see and what they are doing.

A speech pathologist has been trained to assess and treat people who have a communication disability. There are five dimensions of communication:

- Speech
- Language
- Comprehension (semantics)
- Social skills (pragmatics)
- Feeding and Swallowing

Normal Speech Development

	1-2 years	3 years	4 years	5 years	6 years	7 years	8 years
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Normal Language development

4-6 months:

- Babbling papapa, bababa, dadada,
- Vocalizes excitement and displeasure
- Gurgling sounds when left alone and when playing with you.

7 months-1 year:

- Uses speech or non-crying sounds to get and keep attention
- Uses gestures to communication (waving, holding arms to be picked up)
- Has one or two words (hi, dog, dada, mama) around first birthday, although sounds may not be clear

1 year-2 years:

- Uses some one- or two- word questions ("Where kitty?" "Go bye-bye?" "What's that?").

- Puts two words together ("more cookie," "no juice," "mommy book").
- Says new words every month.

2 years-3 years:

- Speaks in simple sentences ("Mommy give water")

3 years-4 years:

- Talks about activities at school or at friend's house
- Uses sentences with four or more words

4 years -5 years:

- Says short stories
- Uses sentences that give lots of details ("The biggest peach is mine").
- Easily communicates with children of his age and adults.

Normal Cognitive/Comprehension development

By the end of 4 years (48 months):

- Correctly names some colors
- Understands the concept of counting and may know a few number
- Follows three-part commands
- Recalls parts of a story

By the end of 5 years (60 months):

- Can count 10 or more objects
- Correctly names at least four colors
- Better understands the concept of time
- Knows about things used every day in the home (money, food, appliances)

Normal development of social skills (pragmatics)

- Use of language to greet people
- Use of language to make friends
- Use of language to play
- Use of language to function effectively in school/society
- A typical social development in children

By the age of 3 all of the below skills are usually acquired

- Using language- greeting, requesting, demanding etc.
- Changing language: talking differently with different people, talking differently in different environments etc.
- Following rules: turn taking, staying on topics, facial expressions, body language etc

Normal feeding/swallowing development

- 3 months: efficient sucking- breast/bottle
- 6 months: can eat pureed food
- 1 year: coarsely mashed and some solid food (depends on dentition)
can drink from sippy cup
- 18 months: can eat most textures
- 2 years: can all solid, sticky texture
can drink from straw and glass
- 3 years: have developed a near normal feeding and swallowing pattern

Why do we need speech language pathologists?

Communication – the process of being able to understand and to be understood – is something most of us take for granted. Communication disabilities are the result of problems with speech, using and understanding language, voice, fluency, hearing, or reading and writing.

Speech-language therapists have a central role in providing services and supports for families and their children as members of the early intervention team to address delays and disabilities in communication, language, speech, emergent literacy, and feeding/swallowing.

When should you contact a speech/swallowing therapist??

- Importance of early detection
- Earlier the detectionearlier the treatment
- Importance of critical period (2 years to 5 years)
- Old habits die hard- easier to treat disorders when detected early
- Child emotionally and psychologically undergoes lesser trauma....
- Easier to mould a child to correct speech and language structure.

Some common speech and language disorders.....

Articulation disorders

- Unclear speech
- Hard to understand
- Example:
Tup for cup
Fun for sun
Dod for dog
- Stammering
- Non fluent speech
- Repetitions: bbbbbb.....lack
- Prolongations: aaaaaaaaaapple
- Block: long period of silence
- Delayed speech and language
- Inability to reach the speech and language milestones for various reasons:
 - Autism
 - Global developmental delay
 - Neurological condition
 - Occurrence of syndrome

Voice disorders

- Unusual or abnormal acoustical qualities in the sounds made when a person speaks
- Very little research here
- What is a “normal” sounding voice?
- Nasality, hoarseness, breathiness

Feeding and swallowing issues

- Irritability or stiffening of the body during feeding
- Failure to accept different textures of food
 - (e.g., only pureed foods or crunchy cereals)
- Long feeding times (e.g., more than 30 minutes)
- Coughing during meals
- Excessive drooling or food/liquid coming out of the mouth or nose
- Frequent spitting up or vomiting
- Recurring pneumonia or respiratory infections

- Less than normal weight gain or growth

Feeding /swallowing issues are managed by:

- Making the muscles of the mouth stronger
- Increasing tongue movement
- Improving chewing
- Increasing acceptance of different foods and liquids
- Improving sucking and/or drinking ability

“We are all born with equal rights to communicate... all we need is a common language to gently embrace the whole world!”