

Speech Sound Disorders

- **What is a speech sound disorder?**

The term 'speech sound disorder' is an umbrella heading under which there are several sub-categories that include:

1. **Articulation disorder**- difficulty precisely and accurately forming specific sounds; may omit or substitute certain sounds for the correct ones; or may alter sounds in ways that make it difficult for strangers to understand their speech.
2. **Phonological disorder**- involve *patterns* of mistakes in producing and manipulating the sounds that make up words (e.g.) substituting all sounds made in the back of the mouth like "k" and "g" for those in the front of the mouth like "t" and "d" (e.g., saying "tup" for "cup" or "das" for "gas").
3. **Motor Speech disorder** - difficulty in planning and co-ordinating the precise movements required for the production of clear speech, with no evidence of damage to nerves or muscles. Children with DVD will have particular difficulties in sequencing sounds together in words.

Note: While it is common for young children learning speech to have speech sound difficulties, it is not expected as a child gets older. Every sound has a different range of ages when the child should make the sound correctly.

- **What signs may a child/ young person with a speech sound impairment show?**

- Typically when a child has a speech sound disorder, the content of what he/she says makes sense. That said, these children are often unintelligible (or **speech is difficult to understand**) for strangers or unfamiliar listeners, particularly when language is not contextualized.
- Parents and teachers tend to understand children with speech sound disorders because they are familiar with the children's speech patterns and have more context about what is being said.



- **How will this affect my child?**
 - Children with speech sound disorders may have **difficulty getting their message across** and being understood.
 - For older children, it can become a **frustration** if their communication is breaking down frequently.
 - In some children with speech sound disorders, their ability to **read and spell** may be impacted by their difficulties with speech sounds.

- **How can you support your child at home?**

- Get their hearing checked if their speech is delayed or you have any concerns.

- Be a good model – speak clearly and slowly and face your child when speaking.

- If your child says a word or sentence incorrectly, rather than correct them or ask them to repeat it, just say the word / sentence back to them correctly to show you have understood. This way your child always hears the correct version.

- In a busy household make sure they have plenty of time to get their message across.

- Make time to sit down with your child and have a conversation – even if it is just for a few minutes a day (although the more one-to-one time the better), spend some quiet time with your child, away from distractions. Look at a book together and talk about the pictures.

- Sing songs and nursery rhymes – songs and rhymes contain rhythm and rhyme, skills that help with speech and literacy development.

