



APRAXIA OF SPEECH

DEFINITION:

A child with apraxia of speech (also referred to as dyspraxia or developmental apraxia of speech) has trouble correctly producing and sequencing speech sounds, syllables, and words. Typically, there is no damage or weakness in the oral musculature. The problem is in the ability to plan oral movement for speech sound production. For example, a child with apraxia may be able to make the /b/ sound, but unable to put the /b/ sound together with the /a/ sound to say /ba/. The child may reverse the sounds and say /ab/. He may be able to say /tay/ and he may be able to say /bu/, but would not be able to put the sounds together to say /tabu/ (table).

The treatment programs for apraxia of speech typically consist of a series of multiple trials using a variety of treatment approaches. Treatment may begin by targeting simple sound combinations and advance to more complex sound combinations. For example, the word "bee" is a simple "consonant-vowel" combination that may be easier for a child to produce. The word "ba-bee" (baby), is more complex (a consonant-vowel-consonant-vowel combination), and often more difficult for a child to sequence. During therapy, the speech pathologist will decide what patterns with which your child is having trouble, and target sound combinations at that level. The SLP will use lots of visual cueing (hand gestures for various sounds), and attempt to have your child improve productions through lots of practice.

Prognosis for a child with the diagnosis of apraxia of speech depends on many factors; cognitive status, severity, attention, cooperation, and parent involvement. The best outcomes are seen in children who received intensive treatment at first signs of delay (18-24 months), demonstrate good attention, and who have had strong parental involvement.

HOME ACTIVITIES/SUGGESTIONS

- A very specific home program should be outlined for you and your child by an ASHA certified speech-language pathologist after the diagnosis of apraxia of speech is made. Your SLP will give you specific sound targets to use at home on a daily basis. Oral motor exercises may also be included in this program.

RESOURCES

- www.apraxia-kids.org
- www.kidspeech.com
- "A Parent Guide to Verbal Dyspraxia" by Judy Michels Jelm MS-CCC/SLP
- Children's Memorial Hospital Department of Speech Language and Swallowing Service (773.327.2880)