

6 REASONS FOR YOUR CHILD TO SEE A SPEECH PATHOLOGIST



01

IF YOUR CHILD IS SLOWER THAN AVERAGE TO START SPEAKING.

Have you been sitting in a Mum's group or Playgroup and wondering why the other children are starting to use words and even sentences, while your little one is more interested in blowing raspberries?

Has your mother-in-law or a GP told you not to worry, but you still have some niggling concerns?

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"Late Talkers are at risk of further speech and language delays, which can then impact learning to read and write."

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As a rule of thumb, we want to hear babies making lots of babbling noises (strings of consonant and vowel sounds) between 6-9 months before they say their first words between 10 and 15 months. We don't expect these words to be pronounced clearly, but parents and close family members should understand them.

Your little person should be combining two or more words together around 24 months. If your child is not meeting these milestones, we consider them to be a Late Talker.

Never take a 'wait and see' approach to your child's talking. The earlier we see your child, the sooner we can put strategies in place to boost their skills and get them back on track.

02

IF YOUR CHILD IS NOT SPEAKING CLEARLY.

Can you understand what your child is saying? Has a grandparent or preschool teacher commented that your child is hard to understand?

When we are considering speech development, the rule of thumb is that at least 75% of people, outside the family, should readily understand what the average 4-year-old is saying.

Different speech sounds develop at different rates. We don't expect toddlers to speak as clearly as preschoolers because they have not learned all the speech sounds yet. For example, children generally learn the sounds that are made with their lips, like 'm' and 'b', before learning more difficult sounds like 'k' and 's'.

Here's a quick checklist of sounds your child should use correctly:

1-3 years p, b, m, n, t, d, w, h

3-4 years k, g, f, y

4-5 years ng (as in 'sing'), l, r, s, z and clusters such as gl, st, sn, pl

5-6 years ch, sh, j, th

This is a rough guide only. If your child is around 3 years of age and you are struggling to understand them, then it's the perfect time to be seen by a Speech Pathologist. If your child is already 4 years of age and hasn't mastered their sounds or other people are having trouble understanding them, then don't wait. It's time to see a Speech Pathologist who can help you and your child work together to improve their speech.

Clear speech is important for socialising, integrating into school and preparing for reading and writing.

03

IF YOUR CHILD IS STUTTERING.

Have you noticed your child repeating whole phrases, words, sounds in words, stretching out words or getting stuck when speaking? Have you noticed that this pattern of speech becomes worse when your child is tired or excited?

Your child may be stuttering. An experienced Speech Pathologist is able to diagnose a stutter, and provide the most effective support and treatment to help your child overcome this behaviour.

Some stuttering or **dysfluency** is common when children are around two-and-a-half to three years of age, as they are rapidly learning to say new words and are excited to use words to communicate. However, if it doesn't resolve after a month or so, it's time to see a Speech Pathologist. Stuttering should ALWAYS be diagnosed and treated early.



IF YOUR CHILD IS NOT SPEAKING IN CLEAR SENTENCES.

When you are listening to your child, do you find yourself 'filling in the gaps'? When your child is talking, are they using lots of non-specific filler words such as 'um', you know, that thing, there'?

Are their sentences full of grammatical mistakes e.g. 'Him did go there'? Do they have trouble recalling words when speaking?

These errors may indicate a language delay or word-finding difficulties. By the time your child is ready to start school, they should be speaking in complete, complex sentences, often with quite adult-like grammar. They should be using connecting words, describing words, words that explain complicated emotions (e.g. confused, delighted), and words that explain what is going on in their brain (e.g. remember, know, understand).

We also expect children starting school to have well-developed storytelling skills. They might give too much or not enough information, or they may end their story suddenly, but they should have a good idea about seeing things from someone else's point of view and include enough information to help them understand their story.



05

IF YOUR CHILD IS NOT MAKING FRIENDS.

We all want our children to succeed in life, and we know that strong social skills are vital to this success.

What you may not know is that Speech Pathologists work with children and adults who are finding it challenging to develop social skills, or what we commonly refer to as pragmatic skills.

These are all the non-verbal and language comprehension skills that govern social interactions. This includes the ability to 'read' what other people are saying from their words and non-verbal signals and using our own body language, tone of voice, pace, and expressive language to successfully interact with others.

If your child is feeling left out or is not making friends as you hoped they would, then talk to a Speech Pathologist. We can develop a personalised plan and to give your child the skills and strategies to make the most of all their social interactions.



IF YOUR CHILD IS STRUGGLING WITH READING OR SPELLING.

Is your child struggling to master the art of reading? Perhaps they started strong in the early years but now find themselves lagging behind in mid to late primary school. Are you worried about their transition to high school?

Did you know that the ability to read and spell is directly linked to listening, auditory processing and language skills? You might think that teaching reading is the domain of school teachers, but in reality, your child needs to master speech, language and listening skills long before they read a single word. In fact, your child is preparing for reading from their earliest years.

Before a child becomes a competent reader, they need strong language and be able to master such skills as rhyming, counting syllables, segmenting words and sounds in words, blending sounds together to make words. They need to have a very strong, well-organised vocabulary that will help them access words quickly when they are reading so they can read fluently and understand what they are reading.

Our team of Speech Pathologists specialise in teaching clear communication skills to children.

We're passionate about helping children to make the link between language and literacy so that they can become strong readers, writers and communicators.

If you're concerned that your child is not developing their literacy skills or you have questions about where they're at, we're here for you. We can conduct a Speech Pathology assessment which will help us create an effective, evidence-based therapy plan that is tailored to you and your family.

We hope you found this information helpful! Looking forward to connecting with you,

The Team at Newcastle Speech Pathology

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