

Dear Parents

Speech therapy covers a wide spectrum of development in children starting from feeding, speech, language, literacy and pragmatics (social aspect of language). As a child develops, various skills are learned and developed but sometimes, a child needs therapy to help them to overcome an obstacle or to learn an age appropriate skill.

I get asked the same questions regularly. 'Does my child need speech therapy?' 'When should he be saying the /r/ sound', 'I am the only one who can understand my child or my father spoke late, should my child be speaking at 3?' Hopefully the following can help you with these questions or I am always a phone call away to discuss your concerns.

Babies begin learning from birth. They cannot say much, besides crying but they listen and learn language, and how to distinguish between sounds. At about 9 months, they have learned all of these sounds receptively and now need their motor skills to develop to allow them to start saying these sounds.

Below are the desired age appropriate speech milestones which a parent or a therapist can look out for in a developing child:

Birth – 6 months

Speech sounds: vowel sounds /a, o, u/

Other: may start to hear vocal play such as squeals, growls, or "raspberries"

6 months – 12 months

Words: a child will start putting consonants and vowels together e.g. ba followed by reduplicated babbling e.g. baba and bable combinations e.g. bamaba

Sounds: /p, b, m/ usually followed by /h, y, n, w, d/

Other: may start responding to name

1-year-old

Words: 2-6 words other than mama and dada

Sounds: you may start hearing /t, g, k, s/

Other: answers yes or no to questions

2-year-old

Words: 50-200 words and will start combining into 2 word phrases e.g. 'mamma up'

Sounds: Same as above including /ng/ as in 'sing'

Speech intelligibility: the child should be understood 50% of the time

Other: points to objects and body parts when named and can follow 1-2 step directions

3-year-old

Words: 300-1,000 words and use 3-4 word phrases

Sounds: Same as above. You may start to hear /f, r, l/ and other sounds developing

Speech intelligibility: the child should be understood 75% of the time

Other: uses pronouns e.g. I, you, he, she, they, etc., present tense e.g. she is running, and prepositions e.g. in, on, under

4-year-old

Words: 1,600-2,000 words

Sounds: you may start hearing later developing sounds such as /z, th, j, v, ch, sh/

Speech intelligibility: the child should be understood 90% of the time

Other: Can ask and answer "wh" questions, follows 3-step directions

5-year-old

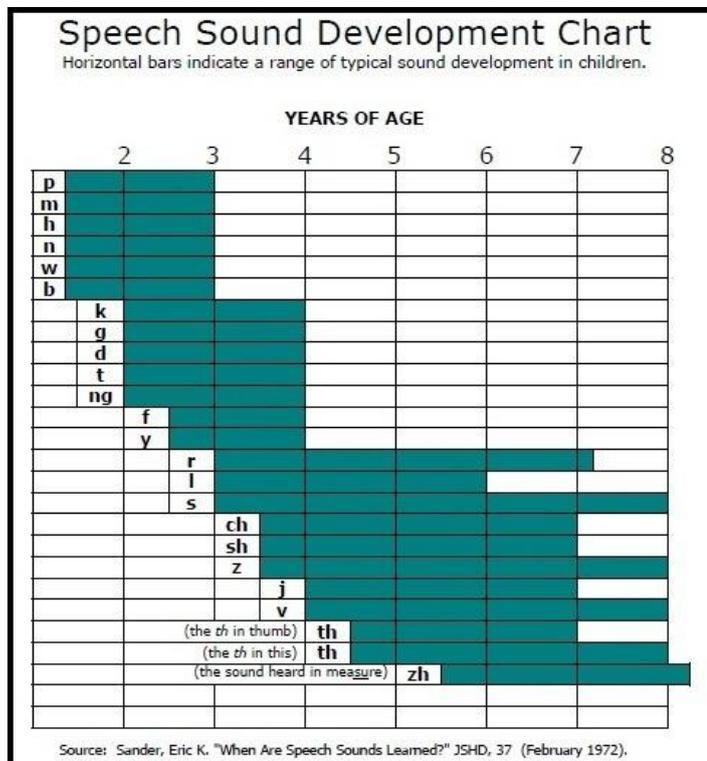
Words: 2,200-2,500

Sounds: same as above; may start to hear /zh/ sound e.g. measure

Speech intelligibility: Should be understood 100% of the time

Other: understands opposites and time concepts e.g. yesterday, today, tomorrow

Below is a chart that shows speech sound development:



The speech sound development chart can vary greatly between different children. There is a wide range of which sounds are considered to be normal, therefore this chart must be taken as a guideline. The beginning of the bar shows when 50% of children are producing the sound and the end of the bar shows when 90-100% of children are producing the sound.

Age appropriate speech errors

If a 3 year old is having difficulty with the /r/ sound such as 'rabbit' and produces the word as 'wabbit' it is considered an age appropriate speech error where the sound is still developing. But if a child is leaving out the initial sounds of a word such as 'ee' for 'tree' or 'ick' for 'stick' it is not considered age appropriate and a speech therapy assessment should be conducted.

Early intervention

I am a firm believer in early intervention. The younger a child, the more malleable they are and the better they can learn! If you as a parent feel as though your child's speech, language or feeding is atypical, then seek out a therapist who can assist you in determining whether or not your child requires therapy. I believe that a parent always knows best and if you are concerned it's best to seek professional guidance.

Red flags for communication

- A quiet baby who does not make sounds or babble
- A child who is not responding to noise
- A child who has not had their first word by 15 months
- A child who is not social and deters from making eye contact
- A vocabulary of less than 50 words by 2 years old
- Unable to follow simple instructions by 2 years old
- Other people are unable to understand your child at 3 years or older
- Has known speech difficulties including: stuttering and lisping
- Has any speech sound error over the age of 5

I hope that this assists you as a parent in understanding speech and language development. If you have any concerns or questions, please feel free to contact me to discuss your child.

Thank you,
Ashira Segal

Speech Therapist and Audiologist
T: 082 513 0325
E: ashira.segal@gmail.com

Manor Medical Centre
189 Kelvin Drive, Morningside Manor