
TRUST YOUR INSTINCTS!!!

Parents are often the first adults to notice a possible delay in their child's speech or language development. Your child's speech may not be clear or your child may use shorter sentences than other children of the same age. This observation generally leads to the question, "**Is my child's speech or language development delayed?**"

Speech skills are different from language skills. Language refers to the use of words and sentences to convey ideas. Speech is the production of sounds that make up the words and sentences.

Using developmental milestones, you can compare your child's development with that of other children the same age. Read the descriptions below and you can get an idea if your child's communication skills are about the same, higher than or lower than expected.

Use caution when applying any measure of development to your child. Individual differences or special circumstances need to be accounted for.

Milestones of Speech and Language Development:

- ✓ **One year old-children** should be able to understand a variety of words and should be using a few single words.
- ✓ **By age two**, approximately 50 words and words combined into two-word phrases.
- ✓ **Between the ages of three and five**, children learn to carry on a conversation, ask and answer questions, follow and give directions, and speak alone in the presence of a group. These skills are important for success in kindergarten.
- ✓ **After age five**, sentences become increasingly complex. Children will begin using words like "when", "while" and "since" to relate two or more ideas in a single sentence.

- ✓ As a rule, children use understandable speech by age four and use all speech sounds correctly by age five to seven.

At what point should I become concerned about my child's development?

Both social and academic success depend on well-developed speech and language skills. Your child may be having difficulty developing these skills if:

1. Your child has experienced ear infections or an unusually long stay (six months or more) in the hospital.
2. Your child is not understood by playmates or others outside the immediate family.
3. Your child is frustrated when trying to communicate and the situation does not improve over a one to two-month period.
4. There is a delay in one year or more in developing speech and language skills.

What can I do about my child's speech and language problem?

Trust your instincts!! If you think there is a problem, seek help. The following website lists the Preschool Speech and Language Services throughout Ontario

<http://www.children.gov.on.ca/htdocs/English/earlychildhood/speechlanguage/locations.aspx>

You can also call your local Public Health Unit or OAFCCD for the contact number for Preschool Speech and Language Services in your area.

If your child has started school, contact the classroom teacher and ask about an assessment for speech and language services.