

Editorial For March 2012

Delayed Speech In Children, Its management with Homoeopathic Remedies.

I see regularly children in my practice who suffer from delayed speech, It becomes essential to understand basics of speech and language development so that we can do a better job.

Understanding Normal Speech and Language Development

Many times it's a big puzzle for us as a homoeopath to tell whether a child is just immature in his or her ability to communicate or has a problem that requires professional attention.

Some developmental norms mentioned below may provide clues:

Before 12 Months

Kids at this age use their voices to relate to their environment. Cooing and babbling are early stages of speech development. As babies get older (often around 9 months), they begin to string sounds together, incorporate the different tones of speech, and say words like "mama" and "dada" (without really understanding what those words mean).

Before 12 months, children should also be attentive to sound and begin to recognize names of common objects (for example fan, light, etc.). Babies who watch intently but don't react to sound may be showing signs of hearing loss.

By 12 to 15 Months

By this time a wide range of speech sounds in their babbling (like p, b, m, d, or n), they begin to imitate and approximate sounds and words modeled by family members, and typically say one or more words (not including "mama" and "dada") spontaneously. Nouns usually come first, like "baby" and "ball." Child should also be able to understand and follow simple one-step directions ("Please give me flying kiss," for example).

From 18 to 24 Months

In this age there is a lot of variability, most toddlers say about 20 words by 18 months and 50 or more words by the time they turn 2. By age 2, they start to combine two words to make simple sentences, such as "mama candy" or "Daddy bye bye." A 2-year-old should also be able to identify common objects, common pictured objects, indicate body parts on self when labeled, and follow two-step commands (such as "show me your nose, show me your teeth, give your doll to me ").

From 2 to 3 Years

This the age when you may hear an "explosion" in the child's speech. The toddler's vocabulary should increase (to too many words to count) and he or she should routinely combine three or more words into sentences.

Comprehension also should increase — by 3 years of age, a child should begin to understand what it means to "put the spoon on the table" or "open the tap." also child also should begin to identify colors and comprehend descriptive concepts (big versus little, for example).

What is the difference between Language and Speech?

Speech and Language Speech and language are often confused, but there is a distinction between the two:

Speech is the verbal expression of language and includes articulation, which is the way sounds and words are formed. Language is much broader and refers to the entire system of expressing and receiving information in a way that's meaningful. It's understanding and being understood through communication — verbal, nonverbal, and written. Although problems in speech and language differ, they often overlap. A child with a language problem may be able to pronounce words well but be unable to put more than two words together. Another child's speech may be difficult to understand, but he or she may use words and phrases to express ideas. And another child may speak well but have difficulty following directions.

Warning Signs of a Possible Problem If you're concerned about your child's speech and language development, there are some things to watch for.

- An infant who isn't responding to sound or who isn't vocalizing is of particular concern. Between 12 and 24 months, reasons for concern include a child who:

isn't using gestures, such as pointing or waving bye-bye by 12 months prefers gestures over vocalizations to communicate by 18 months has trouble imitating sounds by 18 months has difficulty understanding simple verbal requests .

Seek an evaluation if a child over 2 years old: can only imitate speech or actions and doesn't produce words or phrases spontaneously says only certain sounds or words repeatedly and can't use oral language to communicate more than his or her immediate needs can't follow simple directions has an unusual tone of voice (such as raspy or nasal sounding) is more difficult to understand than expected for his or her age. Parents and people closely associated with the child should understand about half of a child's speech at 2 years and about three quarters at 3 years. By 4 years old, a child should be mostly understood, even by people who don't know the child.

Causes of Delayed Speech or Language

Many things can cause delays in speech and language development. Speech delays in an otherwise normally developing child can sometimes be caused by oral impairments, like problems with the tongue or palate (the roof of the mouth). A short frenulum (the fold beneath the tongue) can limit tongue movement for speech production.

Many kids with speech delays have oral-motor problems, meaning there's inefficient communication in the areas of the brain responsible for speech production. The child encounters difficulty using and coordinating the lips, tongue, and jaw to produce speech sounds. Speech may be the only problem or may be accompanied by other oral-motor problems such as feeding difficulties. A speech delay may also be a part of (instead of indicate) a more "global" (or general) developmental delay.

Hearing problems are also commonly related to delayed speech, which is why a child's hearing should be tested by an audiologist whenever there's a speech concern. A child who has trouble hearing may have trouble articulating as well as understanding, imitating, and using language.

Ear infections, especially chronic infections, can affect hearing ability.

Some Cases:

1. A child aged 3 years was brought to me for delayed speech, when the child was six months old the child's mother suffered from spinal tuberculosis and was separated from the child for a period of one year. The child only made sounds could hear but cannot express, the child had a strong fear of being alone, dog and noise, another big problem which father complained was severe constipation the child will strain a lot to pass just a small quantity of stool, the child was very thirsty, had a strong aversion to fruit and eating fatty foods like butter cheese will produce

colic, the child sleeps on abdomen, the child perspires more on the abdomen and extremities, based on above totality I prescribed the child Causticum 30c 5 cup method ,the main indication was separation from mother which made the child insecure as a result the speech was delayed, within three months the child started to speak and within six months.

2. A child aged 5 years had a problem of stammering speech, the child used to stammer more whenever he falls sick like during cough and cold or during fever. He also had problem with concentration and was weak in grasping things, he was a very fearful child and will get frightened easily especially more in the night hours, he is a restless child and will not stay in one place for more than 10-15 minutes, he is very reserved and will take time to mix with friends and relatives, he has a tendency to catch cold very easily, he sweats mostly on chest and feet but it is non offensive. I prescribed Euphrasia 200c 5 cup method the most important indication is stammering when the child falls sick esp. fever, weakness of memory, and tendency to get frightened easily. In a span of three months the child was totally better in stammering.

Here are a few general tips to use at home:

- Spend a lot of time communicating with your child, even during infancy — talk, sing, and encourage imitation of sounds and gestures.
- Read to your child, starting as early as 6 months. You don't have to finish a whole book, but look for age-appropriate soft or board books or picture books that encourage kids to look while you name the pictures.
- Try starting with a classic book (such as radiant reader, nursery rhyme) in which the child imitates the patting motion, or books with textures that kids can touch. Later, let your child point to recognizable pictures and try to name them. Then move on to nursery rhymes, which have rhythmic appeal. Progress to predictable books (such as Enid Brighton, Hardy brothers) that let kids anticipate what happens. Your little one may even start to memorize favorite stories.
- Use everyday situations to reinforce your child's speech and language. In other words, talk your way through the day. For example, name foods at the grocery store, explain what you're doing as you cook a meal or clean a room, point out objects around the house, and as you drive, point out sounds you hear.
- Ask questions and acknowledge your child's responses (even when they're hard to understand). Keep things simple, but never use "baby talk." Whatever your child's age, recognizing and treating problems early on is the best approach to help with speech and language delays. With proper therapy and time, your child will likely be better able to communicate with you and the rest of the world.

