



Let's Talk

Language Disorders in Children

“ I’m very worried about my son, Nathan. He’s 3 years old and hardly uses any words. He doesn’t seem to understand a lot of what I say to him. My older son talked a lot at his age. Is Nate just a late talker? ”

—Sadie

Get Help Early

Children learn to talk at different rates. However, we expect certain language skills as they grow. Most children babble by 8 months. Their first words should come around their first birthday. They should put two words together around their second birthday. Children who are about 2 years old should be able to follow basic directions, such as “give me the cup.” Your 2-year-old should be looking at books, pointing at pictures, and telling you what they are.

Some children with a language delay may catch up. Some children may continue to fall behind. Language disorders may lead to problems in reading, writing, and schoolwork. Children with language problems may act out or have trouble making friends.

Get help early if you have any concerns about your child’s language development. Don’t wait and hope your child will outgrow the problem. A speech-language pathologist, or SLP, can help.

How Do I Know if My Child Has a Language Disorder?

Children with language disorders may have problems:

- Understanding or using new words
- Adding endings to words (such as “two boys” or “mommy’s hat”)
- Putting words in order
- Understanding and talking to others

There are early signs to your child’s language development. Did he babble as an infant? When did she use her first words? When did he start putting two words together? If your child has a hard time learning language, she may have a language disorder.

Fast facts

- Children learn language skills as they grow. Some children have problems learning to talk, listen, read, and write.
- It is better to get help early.
- Speech-language pathologists, or SLPs, can help.

Sometimes a language disorder in children is called specific language impairment, or SLI. SLI can be mild or severe. Children with other disorders such as autism or Down syndrome and children who have a hearing loss can also have SLI. But most of the time, children with SLI don't have any other disorders or hearing loss.

What if I Speak More Than One Language in My Home?

Children have the ability to learn more than one language. It won't confuse your child to speak more than one language in the home. Speak to your child in the language that you know best. If your child is having a hard time learning in all of the languages that you speak, you can contact an SLP. An SLP can help find out if your child has a language disorder.

How Can I Help My Child?

Here are some language tips:

- Talk a lot to your child. This will help your child learn new words.
- Read to your child every day.
- If you speak a language other than English, speak to your child in the language you know best.
- Listen and respond when your child talks.
- Encourage your child to ask you questions.
- Give your child more time to answer questions.

“After working with an SLP, Nathan started putting words together. He shows more interest when I read to him. He talks a lot more to us and his brother. His behavior has improved too, because he tells us what he wants. He still has a lot to learn. People outside of the family still have trouble understanding him. But we are so happy with his progress.”

—Sadie

Language disorders can change a child's life. SLPs can help.

To learn more about child language disorders or to find an SLP near you who has been certified by the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA), visit www.asha.org or call 800-638-8255 or (TTY) 301-296-5650.

My SLP's name is

Appointment

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American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA)
and