



Articulation disorders in children

Overview

Articulation refers to the production of speech sounds by accurately manipulating the articulators (lips, tongue, jaw, teeth, and velum) and airflow in a specific way to communicate with other people. Speech sounds are unique from in language to language. An articulation disorder is a speech sound disorder which occurs when a child produces sounds with incorrect placement, timing, pressure, speed, and/or coordination of the articulators. There are many types of sounds which can be misarticulated, including substitutions, deletions, distortions and additions. It is important to note that some speech errors are developmentally appropriate, meaning children will typically display articulation issues as they learn to speak, but they are expected to catch up by a certain age. If the errors persist even after the standard developmental age and varies based on the sound, then that child has an articulation disorder. The following norms are according to Smit (1990), Shriberg (1993), and Grunwell (1997).

1-2 years	3 years	4 years	5 years	6 years	7 years	8 years
p						
m						
h						
w						
n						
b						
k						
g						
t						
d						
ng						
f						
		er				
		l				
		s				
		ch				
		sh				
		z				
		j				
		v				
		th (umb)				
		th (ai)				
		zh				

Some causes of articulation disorders

- Permanent or occasional hearing loss
- Physical malformations
- Neuromuscular disorders
- Developmental delays and disorders
- No known cause

Signs and Symptoms

As different sounds are mastered at different stages in a child's development, the appropriate age to start treatment will depend in part on the sound that your child is misarticulating. The most common articulation disorders begin to present themselves between the ages of 3 and 6.

- **Substitutions:** The child substitutes one sound for another.
Example: the /w/ sound is often substituted for the /r/ sound (*wabbit* instead of *rabbit*), or the /l/ sound for the /y/ sound (*lello* for *yellow*)
- **Deletions or omissions:** The child deletes a sound in the word.
Example: *ob* for *mob*
- **Distortions:** The child makes an incorrect sound that may not sound like any other sound in the language such as by working very hard to produce a “W” and actually producing a whistling sound instead.
- **Additions:** The child adds an extra sound(s) to a word, such as “*Assemembly*” instead of “*Assembly*”



Who can help with articulation disorders in children?

In general, after the age of 3 years, a child's speech should be intelligible and understood by both familiar and unfamiliar listeners. If your child's speech is difficult to understand by teacher, caregiver, or grandparent speech therapy would be beneficial.

Early intervention is vital!

The sooner your child starts therapy, the better the chances are for getting speech on the right track!



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