

Developmental Verbal Dyspraxia (DVD)



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What is DVD

Also known as Childhood Apraxia of Speech (CAS), DVD/CAS is rare and distinct speech sound disorder, comprising only a tiny percentage of children with speech disorder.

DVD is a complex motor speech sound disorder. Children with DVD have difficulty formulating, organising and coordinating accurate movement plans to control the muscles of the face, lips, tongue and soft palate (which directs air through the nose or mouth) in order to produce clear and accurate speech sounds. They may also have difficulty coordinating and organising voice and breathing patterns used for the making of speech sounds.

DVD often results in a child initially being highly unintelligible both to familiar and unfamiliar people.

Characteristics/features of DVD

- Difficulty with isolated consonant or vowel sounds
- Inconsistent errors on consonants and vowels in repeated productions of syllables or words
- Difficulty with transitioning/blending between sounds resulting in: for example lengthened or disrupted sounds
- Unusual prosody (intonation, tone, stress, and rhythm) which may make children sound flat, uneven or staccato.
- Variations in speech rate due to prolonged sounds or pauses between sounds/syllables/words.
- Oro-motor difficulties including drooling and/or infant feeding problems which may persist

Children with DVD may have one or some of the following co-existing characteristics:

- Difficulties with understanding and using language
- Difficulties with language organisation, particularly sequencing
- Difficulties with social interaction with peers
- Atypical development of early speech skills, such as babbling
- Generalised Developmental Coordination Disorder (DCD/Dyspraxia) affecting other parts of the body

Causes of DVD

Currently there is no identified cause for DVD in most children.

Diagnosis of DVD

A qualified Speech and Language Therapist with experience of children's speech sound disorders is able to assess and diagnose DVD.

Three features are agreed to be a prerequisite for a diagnosis of DVD, these are inconsistency; difficulties with joining and sequencing sounds together and difficulties with using the correct stress patterns

It is therefore important to note that in order for diagnosis of DVD to be made children need to have a sufficient level of speech so that the Speech and Language Therapist can assess the child's use of single sounds, multisyllabic words in repetition and obtain a conversational speech sample.

What helps?

A Speech and Language Therapist can assess and treat these disorders and give specific advice for individual children. But there are several things parents and teachers can do in addition.

- Try not to worry as this can make your child anxious and less able to make themselves understood.
- Try to be relaxed and give your child good examples of speech, to watch and to listen to, by using short sentences and good, clear speech.
- Encourage your child to use gesture to point, to indicate by movements, what they wish to communicate. Play at making happy faces, sad faces, surprised faces and funny faces, to assist your child to use facial expression to help convey what they mean or want.

The most important aspect of speech therapy for children with DVD is practice and repetition of the work daily. Evidence suggests that children should be seen at least twice weekly on an ongoing basis and that block and breaks are not as successful. This type of therapy is not always available in each local area. This is why parents, school, nursery and Speech and Language Therapist need to work as a team so the child can continue the work every day.

Following specialist assessment speech therapy may be based on the following areas:

- Helping the child to make single sounds
- Improving speed, rhythm, loudness and intonation of speech
- Improving the ability to repeat sounds and to swap from one sound to another
- Helping the child to sequence these sounds accurately within words
- Building up from words to sentences

What will progress be like?

Rate of progress varies considerably from child to child. Children with DVD find speech work difficult and progress will be slow, probably taking years rather than months, though this depends on the severity of the problem and the amount of work that can be continued at home/school/nursery. We expect steady progress to be made so that most children should end up with clear, intelligible speech. However, there are even smaller children that this is not the case and these children may need to access an alternative means of communication (either a communication book or high tech communication aid).

Further information available from:
Dyspraxia Foundation, 8 West Alley Hitchin Herts SG5 1EG
Helpline Tel: 01462 454986 (9 – 1, Mon – Fri)
Admin Tel: 01462 455016
Web: www.dyspraxiafoundation.org.uk
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