

Speech Sound Disorder

Speech sound disorder is defined as a communication disorder where a child has difficulty pronouncing words or sounds correctly. Individuals with speech sound disorder have difficulty understanding speech sounds or with knowing how to coordinate the movements necessary for different speech sounds. These communication issues can result in a limited ability to effectively participate in academic, social, and work environments.



Signs & Symptoms

Signs of a speech sound disorder are present when speech sound production is not at the level that would be expected for a child's age and developmental stage. Most speech sounds should be comprehensible by age four. A child with speech sound disorder might have:

- Persistent trouble producing certain speech sounds
- Difficulty getting others to understand what they are trying to say
- Problems with articulation ("wight" for "right")
- Trouble including certain sounds ("poon" for "spoon")

Causes & Risk Factors

There is no exact known cause of speech language disorder, but some factors thought to contribute to its development are hereditary or caused by damage to the central nervous system. Risk factors for developing speech sound disorder include but are not limited to:

- Having a family member who has a speech or language disorder
- Having another developmental problem (autism spectrum disorder, learning disability, etc.)
- Having a hearing issues such as hearing loss

Diagnosis & Treatment

To diagnose speech sound disorder, a speech-language pathologist will administer standardized tests to gauge the individual's specific deficits. If the person is diagnosed with speech sound disorder, speech therapy is the most common form of treatment. However, it is important to note milder forms of the disorder have been known to disappear spontaneously. A speech-language pathologist will help develop a treatment plan that helps the person identify and correct the sounds or words they have trouble saying. The speech-language pathologist will also show the individual how to move their tongue and lips to produce sounds correctly and help them practice.

Sources – Child Mind Institute: <https://childmind.org/guide/speech-sound-disorder/#speech-sound-disorder-what-to-look-for> and Psychology Today: <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/conditions/speech-sound-disorder>