



**Vincent Borg**  
Speech Pathologist  
B.App.Sci.(Sp.Path), M.S.P.A., M.V.I.S.P., C.P.S.P.

**Sarah Young**  
Speech Pathologist  
B.App.Sci.(Sp.Path), M.S.P.A., M.V.I.S.P., C.P.S.P.

**Sara Adler**  
Speech Pathologist  
B.App.Sci.(Sp.Path), M.S.P.A., M.V.I.S.P., C.P.S.P.

**Kimberly Smith**  
Speech Pathologist  
M.Sp Path, Dip.T, B.Ed, M.S.P.A., M.VISP

**Emma Harris**

**Address: 662 Elgar Road, Box Hill North, 3129**

**Email: [enquiries@speech-therapy.com.au](mailto:enquiries@speech-therapy.com.au)**

**Web: [www.speech-therapy.com.au](http://www.speech-therapy.com.au)**

**Phone: 9899 5494**

**Fax: 9899 9508**

## **Childhood Apraxia of Speech**

### *a Childhood Speech Disorder* **Information Sheet No. 1**

*First in a series of information sheets on children's communication difficulties aimed at health and education professionals, parents and caregivers.*

Is your 3 or 4 year old difficult to understand? Is speech unintelligible even to familiar people at 3 years of age? Is your child frustrated by his or her inability to make himself or herself understood? Does your child have very limited speech sounds? Perhaps your child may be suffering from **Childhood Apraxia of Speech** – hard enough for **us** to say, let alone children.

**Childhood Apraxia of Speech** is a disorder of speech (articulation). It involves the breakdown of the smooth sequences of sounds in words. It is not however a muscle weakness problem. It ranges from **severe**, where children have difficulty producing a sound in isolation, to mild. Some features common to children with Developmental Verbal Dyspraxia can include poor babbling and imitation skills as an infant, "groping" when trying to imitate a sound, deletion of consonants, distortion of vowels, increased errors in multisyllabic words, inconsistent production of sounds.

#### **The warning signs of Childhood Apraxia of Speech are:**

1. Speech is unintelligible to familiar adults by 3 years of age.
2. Little speech used by 18 –24 months of age.
3. Your child is able to say a word once but is unable to repeat it in the same way.
4. Your child does not use a wide variety of sounds by 2-3 years of age.
5. Your child is frustrated with their ability to communicate at any age.

Speech Therapy progress for children with Childhood Apraxia of Speech is generally long term. Therefore children should be seen **as early as possible** whilst their speech and language skills are still developing. Early treatment also helps reduce the risk of associated problems developing such as emotional, behavioural and learning difficulties (reading, spelling and writing). Children do not tend to "grow out of Childhood Apraxia of Speech", therefore seek an opinion or an assessment **as soon as you are concerned about your child**.

There are a number of therapy techniques to help including the **Nuffield Dyspraxia Program** and **Cued Articulation**, and some research into exciting new techniques, such as **Prompt Therapy**.

**Remember, the earlier children are treated the more likely their successful outcome with communication.**

I hope you find this information helpful and any comments would be greatly appreciated. Please do not hesitate to contact the clinic on 9899-5494 if you have any concerns.

*NB: The information contained herein is not advice. It is general information for adults on children's communication development. It is not intended to be used as a sole means of identifying children with communication difficulties. Advice from a qualified paediatric Speech Pathologist is recommended.*

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