



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

Web: www.speech-therapy.com.au

Phone: 9899 5494

Fax: 9899 9508

Commonly Asked Questions and Comments **About Speech & Language Development** **Information Sheet No. 4**

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

1. "Most children's speech gets better with time"

It is true that some children's speech improves over time, however for some it doesn't. Difficulty communicating with young children can cause frustration, anxiety, avoidance of speaking, poor interaction with children and adults, withdrawal, and eventually may lead to literacy and learning problems at school age.

Conclusion: *Early treatment is better than "wait and see". Seek a professional opinion early*

2. "All children stutter – it is normal!"

Many children between 2 and 4 years of age often pass through a period of normal "disfluency" often repeating words perhaps 2-3 times without any great effort (eg, "Mum, *can can* I have a drink *and and* an ice-cream?"). However many other children display other types of stuttering behaviour, such as repetition of parts of words (eg "c-c-c-can") or elongations of sounds (eg "sssssome"), facial grimacing, eye blinking, frustration.

Conclusion: *Seek an opinion early, particularly if there is frustration. (see info sheet No 8)*

3. Einstein didn't speak till he was 4, so it's O.K. if my child is a bit slow to talk."

I wonder if that is really true! If so, he was an exception! We know that most children pass through very distinct stages of language development within certain time frames. Generally single words by 12-15 months, 2-word utterances by 24 months, 3-4 word phrases by 2 ½ years, 5-6 word phrases or more by 3 years of age. Delayed language development can put your child at risk of developing other social, emotional and later literacy problems, and can be extremely frustrating for your child.

Conclusion: *We can't ask Einstein if he really **did** develop language so late, so don't risk it with your child. Seek an opinion early if you are concerned. (see info sheet No 4)*

4. "Does poor speech & language skills mean poor reading skills?"

There is certainly a connection between literacy development and speech / language development. Good reading skills are helped enormously by good speech / language skills.

Conclusion: *Read lots of stories together with your child from the earliest of ages*

5. "Is T.V. bad for speech / language development?"

Some T.V. shows (or computers) some of the time can be helpful for speech/language development, especially if they are watched together with a parent or caregiver. Playschool, Sesame Street, The Wiggles are generally good. Talk about the shows – what is happening. Explain things for them.

Conclusion: *Watch some T.V. (computers) with your child and **talk** about it!*

6. "Boys are slower to develop speech than girls."

Recent studies have shown that there is some evidence to support this widely held belief. However the difference is not dramatic and does not significantly affect our treatment techniques. We do see more boys in the clinic than girls however!

Conclusion: *Speech & language problems occur in both boys & girls.*

7. "Should I correct my child's speech errors?"

Provide good speech models from time to time, especially after your child makes some sound/language "errors". Say the correct word/sentence a few times after your child but don't necessarily ask your child to repeat it back. Be careful not to do too much of this or your child may get upset.

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.

This information is copyright, Vincent A Borg, 2009