

# What is Speech Apraxia?

Apraxia is a disorder that may be developmental or acquired. It is a disorder involving motor planning weakness. Essentially though a person may know what they want to say, the message from the brain to the oral motor structure is disrupted somewhere along the way, so that the mouth cannot accurately produce the desired word.

## Some characteristics of Speech Apraxia include:

- *Difficulty producing single speech sounds in imitation of another, though there are no problems with coordination or strength of the speech mechanism*
- *Difficulty saying multi-syllabic words (ex. spaghetti)*
- *Ability to say automatic or reactive words, but volitional or purposeful speech is difficult (ex. reciting the alphabet or screaming for 'help' may be fine, but speaking about one's vacation may be difficult)*
- *Inconsistent errors, especially on repeated efforts(ex. may err on /d/ in dog when first said, but second time in a conversation is fine)*
- *Groping to produce sounds*
- *May be unaware of own errors*
- *Marked difference between receptive and expressive language*
- *Most often errors are omissions of sounds*
- *Increase in errors with increase in word length*
- *Connected speech is poorer than single word productions*
- *Errors are more common in fricatives (f, v, th), affricatives, (s, z, sh, ch, j, etc.) and blends (ex. br, kl, tr)*
- *Errors on vowel sounds*

*If several of these characteristics are present for a child, it may be necessary to consult with a speech/language pathologist for further assessment.*

Resources:

*Treating Articulation Disorders*; Edited by Harris Winitz, University Park Press, Baltimore: 1984.

*Developmental Apraxia of Speech* workshop, presented by Edythe Strand, Ph.D, CCC-Sp/L, 1989

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