

LANGUAGE DELAY??? DON'T DELAY!

If your child is slow to start talking – don't just wait and see!!

Speech pathologists see many children aged between 18 months and 3 years of age who only say a few words. The parents of these children have come to see us even though their friends have said 'Don't worry, he'll talk when he's ready' or their relatives have said 'You didn't talk until you were two – he's just like you were!'. We applaud these parents for following their instincts and seeking help anyway, because early intervention is SO important!

Research has shown us that two thirds of children who aren't using any (or many words) at two years of age, will still have language delays twelve months later at three years of age if help is not sought. Waiting that 12 months until a child is three means that the child may fall further behind and at this later age, it can be harder to catch up. Without seeking help, it is difficult to know whether your child will have further problems in the future.

LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT IN THE FIRST 3 YEARS:

By 12 months of age: Speech and language development starts right from birth. Parents start interacting with their babies immediately, by looking into their eyes, making sounds and talking to them about what they are doing in simple and repetitive language. Babies do lots of preparation for talking through:

- growing in their understanding and cooing, and
- babbling to learn about the sounds they can make.

Children usually say their first words at around 12 months of age and their vocabulary should begin to grow.

By 2 years of age:

Children should have a vocabulary of around 200 words by two years of age. You won't hear all of these words in one day but you might hear close to that many over a week or two. By two years of age, children are also starting to put two or more words together to make a sentence and their average sentence length will be two words.

By 3 years of age:

You should find that your child's vocabulary is increasing rapidly and that they are using about 500 words. Children also begin using many more words together and the average sentence length is between three and five words.



It is at around 3 years of age that you can have a really good conversation with your child as they start to tell long stories and talk about the things they learn from asking thousands of questions!

RULE OF THUMB:

All this information can be summarised into a simple 'rule of thumb'. And that is – if your child is 1 year, they should be using one word sentences, a child of two years should be using two word sentences and a child who is three years of age should be using an average of at least three words in a sentence.

Another rule of thumb is that an adult who is not familiar with your child should be able to understand 80% of what your child is saying by the age of 3 years.

WHAT IF MY CHILD ISN'T FOLLOWING THAT PATTERN OF DEVELOPMENT?

If you find that your child is a little bit behind his or her peers in their language development, don't panic, but do seek professional help. There are many factors involved in a child's language development and there may be one of a number underlying problems impacting on your child's ability to express themselves. These factors include co-ordination problems with the muscles of their mouth.

It is important to seek help because without advice, you won't know if your child will be in the one third that recovers without help, or if they are in the two thirds that will continue to have problems because of an underlying difficulty.

A speech pathologist can give you language stimulation strategies and work with your child to help them catch up. They can also help determine what the underlying difficulties are and guide you through the appropriate treatment of these.

At Tyquin Group we have a team that is experienced in diagnosing and treating children with language delays or disorders from 12 months right the way through to 18 years of age.

It's never too late to get help and it's NEVER too early!!