

# What is Verbal Dyspraxia?



## My child has recently been diagnosed with verbal dyspraxia. What does this mean?

Verbal dyspraxia is a condition where children have difficulty in making and co-ordinating the precise movements needed to produce clear speech with their mouths; and without any signs of damage to nerves or muscles. Verbal dyspraxia is also sometimes called Childhood Apraxia of Speech. Children with verbal dyspraxia find it hard to produce individual speech sounds and to put sounds together in the right order in words. As a result, their speech is often hard to understand. Children with verbal dyspraxia have speech that sounds unusual; they don't just sound like a younger child.

Although it is speech that is mostly affected in verbal dyspraxia, children can also have difficulty moving their mouths, lips and tongue for things like eating and can sometimes find it hard to co-ordinate their body movements.

Verbal dyspraxia can be diagnosed by a speech and language therapist alone, although often a paediatrician and/or an occupational therapist will be involved in reaching such a diagnosis. They will look for certain features within a child's speech.

These features might include:

- A limited range of consonant and vowel speech sounds.
- Overuse of one sound (favourite articulation)
- Inconsistent production and unusual error patterns
- Breakdown in sequencing sounds in words, particularly as the length of words increases.
- Fine and gross motor co-ordination/development

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**I CAN Help enquiry service** [www.ican.org.uk/help](http://www.ican.org.uk/help)

Call 020 7843 2544 to arrange a free phone call from one of our speech and language therapists or email [enquiries@ican.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@ican.org.uk)

**Talking Point** [www.talkingpoint.org.uk](http://www.talkingpoint.org.uk)

Visit this website for information about children's communication.

A diagnosis can be quite complicated and it may take some time before it is made. We know that verbal dyspraxia is usually an unfolding or changing condition. This means that as children progress, the difficulties they have can change or sound different.

Children with verbal dyspraxia will need to see a speech and language therapist for treatment and progress is often quite slow. They will need regular, direct therapy. Children with verbal dyspraxia might use different ways to communicate e.g. signing or special equipment that can be programmed to talk for them.

The progress that children make with dyspraxia is different from child to child. Experience tells us that most children learn to speak more clearly with the right help. The progress that a child makes depends on lots of things, like how severe their dyspraxia is, whether they have any other difficulties as well, their age and the amount of practise they get.

You can find out more information about verbal dyspraxia from [www.apraxia-kids.org](http://www.apraxia-kids.org) and [www.dyspraxiafoundation.org.uk](http://www.dyspraxiafoundation.org.uk).

I CAN also run the [Enquiry Service](#), an information line run by qualified speech & language therapists. If you have any questions about the speech, language or communication skills of a child you know, call us on 020 7843 2544 to book arrange a call back at a time convenient for you.

You can also email your questions to [help@ican.org.uk](mailto:help@ican.org.uk) .

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