**Speech & Language Therapy for Children**

**Source: Ananya, Child Developer & Early Intervention Therapist**

Speech and Language Therapy is support for children with difficulties in speech, language and communication. Children with speech difficulties can have an impact on eating, drinking and swallowing as well. A Speech and Language Therapist assesses and helps the child with different skills the child will have to learn to communicate with others, understand what others say to them which will ultimately enable the child to overcome the speech and language difficulties.

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Speech-Language Pathologists work with children on a variety of childhood developmental delays and disorders. They can span from mild articulation delays to more complex disorders such as Autism, Down syndrome, Motor Speech Disorders, and other childhood conditions.

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## **What is Paediatric Speech-Language Therapy?**

##  A Speech-Language Pathologist (SLP) addresses speech delays, disorders of communication and swallowing with patients of all ages. A paediatric Speech-Language Therapist works with the kid on every aspect of speech production, including understanding and appropriate usage of vocabulary, grammar and all the social aspects of language.

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 **Speech-Language Therapists work on the following skills:**

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* Receptive Language Skills (how words and gestures/understood)
* Expressive Language Skills (the ability to express our wants/needs)
* Pragmatic Language skills (using language appropriately in social situations)
* Articulation (how sounds are formed and sequenced to create words)
* Oral Motor Skills - strength, stability, placement, and range of motion of the oral musculature (jaw, lips, and tongue) to produce sounds
* Feeding Skills (learning eating patterns that create healthy speech patterns)
* Augmentative Alternative Communication - using Sign Language,
* PECS (Picture Exchange Communication System).
* Fluency - learning breath and speech patterns to sustain appropriate rate, tone, and fluent speech.
* Caregiver Education/Parent Training – teaching strategies to promote carryover of skills in the natural everyday environment.

## **How do I know if my child needs Speech-Language Therapy?**

* Not babbling or producing any sound.
* Unable to get needs met through either vocalization.
* Does not speak any words (by 18 months).
* Other individuals are not able to understand at least 50% of what your child is saying (by 2 years of age).
* Is only using one word at a time rather than stringing together 2-3 words to express. themselves (by 3 years of age).
* Is unable to say a range of different sounds (e.g. ‘p’, ‘b’, ‘t’, ‘w’, ‘n’).
* Struggles to find the correct word to say often has trouble thinking of what to say.
* Is not able to answer ‘wh’ questions (who, what, where, when and why).
* Is not able to tell a story with a beginning, middle and end.
* Is not able to understand a simple story.