

# Developmental Verbal Dyspraxia

## What is it?

Developmental Verbal Dyspraxia (DVD) refers to a condition where children have difficulty producing sounds or combining sounds into words. It can be very frustrating, as they know what they want to say but find it very difficult to communicate their needs, wants, thoughts and feelings.

DVD is a difficulty in a person's ability to organise the speech muscles to make the sounds they need, to say the words they want to say. Although we don't know exactly what causes DVD, some research is showing it is caused by an inconsistency in the neurological connection needed for speech. The term "developmental" is used to indicate that the difficulties are present from birth and that the difficulties are not the result of damage to nerves or muscles.

## How do you recognise DVD?

Children with DVD will present with specific speech difficulties as well as language characteristics.

Specific Speech Difficulties include:

- Difficult to understand
- Inconsistent speech errors, eg. a child may say tup, bup and gup for cup
- Sounds in words are in the wrong order, eg. papnee for nappy
- Simplified words, eg. dip for skip
- Searching mouth movements as a child attempts to coordinate their structures and muscles to produce sounds and words
- Difficulty in initiating speech particularly when under pressure or excited
- Difficulty in saying longer words, eg. caterpillar
- Marked variability in the quantity of speech from day to day

Language Characteristics:

- A good understanding of what is said to them
- Very communicative with gestures and facial expressions developed through frustration with their difficulty in communicating with others
- Delayed language development
- Limited or minimal babble

Children with DVD may also present with:

- Feeding difficulties from birth, ie. breast or bottle feeding difficulties due to poor oral skills
- Poor saliva control
- May have motor and oral dyspraxia as well as verbal dyspraxia

Oral dyspraxia involves the lips, tongue and palate and is characterised by difficulty in spontaneously producing movements of the mouth. They can often produce movements automatically but are unable to do them when they are asked. Children with oral dyspraxia may also have previous and current histories of difficulties with eating and drinking.

Motor dyspraxia refers to the difficulties with fine and gross motor movements of the body. Gross motor skills refer to large movements of the body, such as walking and jumping. Fine motor skills refer to smaller movements such as finger movements and drawing.

### **Helping children with DVD**

DVD is a very specific speech problem and requires very specific assistance.

Intensive Speech Therapy and frequent daily practice are vital. Pressuring a child to speak or speak more clearly often makes DVD worse, rather than better.

Encouraging, praising for effort and providing options such as using gestures or signs is more successful for a child with DVD. It can be helpful to use more than one form of communication to deal with the frustration of not being able to communicate effectively. Alternative communication forms can be developed to help the children communicate and reduce frustration while they work on developing their oral speech skills.

If you would like more information or continue to be concerned about your child's progress, the contact your local Speech Pathologist

Moore Speech Pathology  
(02) 4353 3226  
info@moorespeech.com.au

