Preschool Language Disorders

WHAT ARE PRESCHOOL LANGUAGE DISORDERS?

Language involves the exchange of ideas using words, usually in spoken or written form. A preschooler (aged 3 to 5 years old) with language disorders may have trouble with either understanding and/or expressing themselves.

SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF PRESCHOOL LANGUAGE DISORDERS

Some children have problems with understanding (receptive language). They may have difficulties with the following:

- Following directions
- Answering questions
- Understanding what gestures mean
- Identifying objects and pictures
- Taking turns when talking with others

Some children have problems expressing themselves (expressive language). They may have difficulties with the following:

- Asking questions
- Naming objects
- Using appropriate gestures
- Knowing how to put words in the right order to form sentences
- Learning songs and rhymes
- Using correct pronouns, like “he” or “me”
- Using correct prepositions, like “in” or “on”
- Knowing how to start a conversation and keep it going

Many children have difficulties with both receptive and expressive language.

Some children also show difficulties in their early reading and writing skills, such as:

- Holding a book right side up
- Looking at pictures in a book and turning pages
- Telling a story with a beginning, a middle, and an end
- Naming letters and numbers
- Learning the alphabet
HOW ARE PRESCHOOL LANGUAGE DISORDERS TREATED?

Speech and Language Therapists can help children with language disorders. They work together with you, teachers and other professionals on language problems found during the assessment. Good language skills help with learning, behavior, self-esteem, and social skills.

Here are some possible treatment goals:

- Increase your child's understanding and use of language
- Coach caregivers, family members, teachers and other professionals various strategies to communicate with your child
- Help your child use other ways to communicate when needed. This may include simple gestures, picture boards, or computers that say words out loud. This is also called augmentative and alternative communication, or AAC.

HOW CAN I HELP?

Seek an assessment by a Speech and Language Therapist should you have any queries about your child’s language skills.

Here are some language tips:

- Talk a lot to your child. This will help your child learn new words.
- Read to your child every day.
- Create opportunities for your child to comment or request
- Speak to your child in the language you know best.
- Listen and respond when your child talks.
- Encourage your child to ask you questions.
- Give your child time to answer questions.
- Set limits for watching TV and using electronic media. Use the time for talking and reading together.
- Point out words you see. Point to signs in the supermarket, at school, and outside

CAUSES OF PRESCHOOL LANGUAGE DISORDERS

The cause of a language disorder is often unknown. Some causes of preschool language disorders may be:

- Family history of language disorders
- Premature birth
- Low birth weight
- Hearing loss
• Autism
• Intellectual disabilities
• Syndromes, like Down syndrome or Fragile X syndrome
• Fetal alcohol spectrum disorder
• Strokes
• Brain injuries
• Tumors
• Cerebral palsy
• Poor nutrition
• Failure to thrive

TYPES OF PRESCHOOL LANGUAGE DISORDERS

Problems with understanding are called receptive language disorders. Problems with language use are called expressive language disorders. Children may have problems with both.

Types of preschool language disorders may include problems with:

• Understanding basic concepts, questions, and directions
• Learning new words
• Using words in the right order
• Having conversations and telling stories

HOW CAN SPEECH LANGUAGE THERAPISTS HELP?

Speech and Language Therapists help in a variety of ways when working with preschoolers with language disorders. They work directly with children and their parents, caregivers, teachers and other professionals. They help create awareness in understanding the importance of connection between the words that we hear and say, and our ability to read and write later on. They also help children improve their understanding and use of language. They help children:

• Follow directions
• Express themselves
• Ask and answer questions
• Form short meaningful sentences
• Have a conversation
• Describe pictures and events

They also help children with beginning reading and writing skills. They build children's awareness of written words in books and in the environment.

Speech and Language Therapists speak to parents, caregivers, teachers, and other professionals about strategies to help children improve and enhance their language skills. They help parents understand how to work with their children at home and in everyday activities.

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REFERENCES:

- Communication_Impairment_in_Australia.pdf, Speech Pathology Australia.
- https://www.rcslt.org/clinical_resources/language_disorder/overview