

Some children can speak, but the words won't flow smoothly. They can't express their thoughts in a full sentence as the words or syllables break. There may not be clarity in their speech or there may be stammering. Such problems come as a barrier to a child's communication, and could, in some cases, make the child less confident about themselves.

What Is Speech Therapy?

Speech therapy is a language intervention method that focuses on improving a child's speech, their ability to discern speech and overcome problems like poor articulation, disfluency (repetition of a sound, word, or phrase), and phonological and voice disorders.

It helps a child express themselves better through verbal and non-verbal language. It focuses on:

- **Articulation and fluency** to form sounds, words, and sentences. Children affected with speech problems are not good at articulating words and speaking fluently. Speech therapy aims to work on this difficulty to help articulate words better.
- **Regulation of the volume** of speech. Often kids with speech problems speak in either low volume or high. Speech therapy focuses on helping kids articulate words clearly and regulate pitch and volume.
- **Expressive language** through pictorials, signs, and written forms. Children who suffer from speech disorders find it difficult to convey a message to others using words, sentences, and writing. They also struggle to use grammar correctly and frame words in a sentence and describe incidents. Speech therapy aims to work on these areas.

How To Know If Your Child Needs Speech Therapy?

You need to understand the levels of the problem when speech therapy becomes necessary. Here are some criteria:

1. Your child may need speech therapy if:

- People find it difficult to understand what your child says as the speech is not clear.
- Your child struggles in uttering words or translating their thoughts into words.
- The child's speech is disturbed with stuttering, repetition, prolongation, and blocks.
- The child utters only one or two words like mama, papa rather than two-to- three-word sentences.
- Your child has not developed on social skills like making friends, having direct contact, learning play skills, and engaging with others.

2. Your child may have perfect pronunciation and may also be an early reader. But they may still need speech therapy to hone their pragmatic language skills or the process of using **language**

aptly in social scenarios to have a conversation, make new friends or simple requests to someone.

3. A child may also need speech therapy due to disabilities, or medical conditions like autism or hearing impairment as they affect the ability to communicate.

Consult a speech-language pathologist (SLP) in the above cases. The SLPs often begin services for these kids at a young age and continue through the school years.