A SPEECH PATHOLOGIST is a professional who assesses, diagnoses and treats people who have communication and/or swallowing difficulties.

One in seven Australians have some form of communication difficulty. This means that one in seven people have a problem understanding other people or being understood by people.

These include problems in the following areas:
- Speech difficulties including
  - Articulation
  - Voice
  - Fluency
- Language and listening difficulties

COMMUNICATION DEVELOPMENT

Learning to communicate is a step by step process and children develop individually. While individual children develop their communication skills at different rates, there is a typical pattern to speech and language development.

Speech sounds

Between birth and 3 years, children will attempt:
- Lip sounds – p, b, m, w
- Tongue tip sounds – t, d, n
- Back of mouth sounds – k, g
- Other sounds – h, y

By 4 ½ years children will also attempt:
- Tongue tip sounds – s, z
- Middle of the mouth sounds – sh, ch
- Other sounds – l, j, f

Most children can be understood most of the time by age 5 years.

Language and listening

By age one, your baby should be able to:
- Respond to familiar sounds
- Understand simple commands
- Say ‘dad’, ‘mum’ and a few other words

By age two, your toddler should be able to:
- Understand simple sentences
- Use more than 50 words
- Try simple sentences of 2 or 3 words

By age three, your child should be able to:
- Follow 2-step directions
- Enjoy telling stories and asking questions
- Be understood by familiar adults

By age four, your child should be able to:
- Follow 3-step directions
- Use lots of words in four and five word sentences
- Speak clearly enough to be understood by most people

By age five, your child should be able to:
- Follow 4-step verbal instructions
- Talk about events which are happening, have happened, or might happen
- Speak clearly enough to be understood by anyone

WHEN TO SEEK HELP

CONTACT SPEECH PATHOLOGY IF:
- You are worried about your child’s communication or feeding.
- The child is experiencing frustration.
- The child has difficulties with the smooth flow of speech (stuttering).

It is important to seek help as soon as the problem is recognised as prompt referral and early intervention encourages greater improvement. Limited services may be available for older children.

Early referral is also important, as waiting times for assessments exist at all centres.

CALL SPEECH PATHOLOGY INTAKE ON 4328 7999
SERVICES PROVIDED

The Speech Pathology Department provides a number of services to children.

ASSESSMENT

Assessments are done on a one-to-one basis. The Speech Pathologist will evaluate your child’s communication skills, including speech and language, or swallowing (as necessary). The Speech Pathologist will then be able to give advice or recommendations regarding the need for treatment.

TREATMENT SERVICES

Your child’s individual needs are considered and different treatment options may be offered, depending upon results of the initial evaluation.

Early Communication Program

Parents of children under 3 years of age may be offered a 4-week training program focussing on language and speech development. Upon completion of the program children are offered reviews or treatment with a Speech Pathologist as needed.

Individual Treatment

Individual treatment involves the parent and the child attending regular sessions with a Speech Pathologist targeting the child’s areas of difficulty.

Group Sessions

Group treatment involves a child receiving therapy with a number of other children with similar communication difficulties. Individual needs are considered within the group sessions.

Home Programs

Parents are advised how to assist their child to complete therapy activities at home. Review appointments are available to monitor progress.

FEEDING AND SWALLOWING SERVICES

Speech Pathologists provide assessments and follow-up appointments for children with feeding or swallowing difficulties. This may be within the hospital (during admission) or in Community Health Centres.

LOCATIONS

Speech Pathology is offered at a number of Community Health Centres across the Central Coast.

TO MAKE A REFERRAL CALL
INTAKE ON 43 287 999

Please leave a message on the answering service and your call will be returned by a Speech Pathologist, who can answer your questions and discuss your concerns.

Once a referral is received you will be sent a questionnaire to complete and return to your local Community Health Centre. When the questionnaire is returned your child will be placed on a waiting list for an assessment. You will receive a letter from your centre when an appointment for your child becomes available.