

What's News in Speech!



Apraxia: Who, When, and Why?

by

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Apraxia or dyspraxia is a motor speech disorder which causes many problems for speech clinicians and their clients. When a child or adult has an articulation (phoneme/sound) disorder, a well trained therapist should always give an Oral Peripheral examination. This is a test for the lips, tongue, palate and teeth. It involves the strength, movement and structure of these mechanisms. This test

involves: checking the alignment of the teeth, analyzing the roof of the mouth (hard palate) for a line of symmetry or asymmetry, checking various lip and tongue movements, examining the uvula (that funny thing that dangles in the back of the throat) for any abnormal structure, and assessing tongue and lip coordination in rapid, alternating movements.



What is Apraxia?

Apraxia is a motor speech disorder that inhibits the person's ability to move the tongue and lips appropriately to execute speech.

Apraxia can also affect chewing and swallowing. "Apraxic Speech" has many sound errors, and can sound slurred and/or bumpy.

Apraxia also affects the person's vocabulary, or speech formation since coordination of sounds is problematic.

Who has Apraxia?

People of all ages, male and female can have apraxia. Children who are born with this disorder are referred to as having dyspraxia, onset of the problem later in life is known as apraxia.

Why do people get Apraxia?

Over the past 10 years, dyspraxia or developmental apraxia in young children has been researched. There are many documented cases of apraxia in young children, especially in the neurologically impaired population. An exact cause is not known.

The most common cause of Apraxia in adults is stroke (Cerebral Vascular Accident.) An area of the brain, known as "Broca's Area" controls some of the coordination for speech. This area is found in the pre-central gyrus and also has an impact on apraxia and related motor speech disorders.

What can you do for Apraxia?

Speech therapy can help apraxic people at any age. The therapy involves improving the range of motion of the lips and tongue, improving the placement of the lips and tongue for speech, improving the strength of the lips and tongue, and improving the coordination that is needed for speech. There are commercial videos, and programs available...but here are some of the popular therapy techniques: use of a mirror, blowing bubbles, sucking, exercises for the tongue and lips, swallowing therapy, and the practice of placement for various speech sounds.



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