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It is Never Too Early

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The Question

When should my child start speech therapy? This is a common question for parents who are wondering if their child is in need of speech therapy services. The answer is... it is never too early. If you suspect your child may have a speech disorder, it is important to receive an evaluation as soon as possible. The more help your child receives early on, the more likely he or she will benefit from therapy.

It is in the Research

Research suggests 70-80% of toddlers with speech difficulties will outgrow a language delay if it is strictly an expressive delay (have difficulty expressing themselves in some way). That means 20-30% of children will not catch up to their peers. It is important to know that when children have difficulty with their language skills, they most likely will have persistent struggles with reading and writing at school and in the future.

Reasons to Intervene Early

Keep in mind that early intervention does not only involve therapy for a child, but education for a parent. Early intervention has a significant impact on a child's development and helps with overall communication, interactions with others, and social and emotional developmental skills.

Early Intervention helps with:



- **Brain Development** – During the first three years of life, a child develops an immense amount of speech and language skills. The learning that takes place has a huge influence on how the brain develops. If a child is having difficulty during this time, therapy should begin as soon as possible to take full advantage of this developmental period.



- **Elimination** – With early intervention to address speech delays, it is more likely that a child will have normal speech and language development in school. While actual cause for the speech delay may be unknown, early intervention for a child will help develop language.



- **Remediation** – Improving communication skills during play and daily routines is an effective way to intervene and helps a child become a better communicator with adults and peers. Intervening within the natural environment helps decrease frustration and negative behaviors.

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• **Compensatory Strategies**

– These include strategies that help develop a functional means of communication for a child not using verbal language when communicating. Compensatory strategies also help reduce frustrations that come with the child not being able to communicate his/her wants and needs to others. Strategies include using basic sign language or pictures to communicate.

During early intervention, it is imperative that parents be provided with tools and techniques to help with early communication. Parents provide the biggest language model to their child by being around them on a daily basis. Therapists can teach parents valuable early language strategies to help develop communication during play and daily routines like bath and bedtime.

If you question whether your child needs early intervention, seek help as soon as possible. The earlier your child receives help, the more chances they have at being an effective communicator.



Resources:

“Benefits of tackling speech and language delays early on,” S.L. Hunter SpeechWorks, accessed August 23,
<http://slhunterspeechworks.com/2015/02/17/benefits-tackling-speechlanguage-delays-early/>

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