

DEVELOP- MENTAL LANGUAGE DISORDERS (DLD)



Developmental language disorder (DLD) is a lifelong condition that significantly affects a person's ability to understand and use language. It is more than just a difficulty

with reading and writing and can have a profound impact on a person's social and academic life.

SYMPTOMS OF DLD

People with DLD may have difficulty with the following:

- Understanding what others are saying
- Expressing their own thoughts and feelings
- Following directions
- Learning new vocabulary
- Using grammar correctly
- Participating in social conversations

PREVALENCE OF DLD

DLD is more common than many people realize. It is estimated that 1 in 14 children

has DLD. This means that there are millions of people around the world who are affected by this condition.

CAUSES OF DLD

The exact cause of DLD is unknown. However, it is thought to be caused by a combination of genetic and environmental factors.

TREATMENT FOR DLD

There is no cure for DLD, but there are effective treatments available. Treatment typically involves speech therapy and language therapy. These therapies can help people with DLD improve their understanding and use of language.

IMPACT OF DLD

DLD can have a significant impact on a person's life. It can make it difficult to make friends, succeed in school, and hold a job. However, with early diagnosis and treatment, people with DLD can learn to manage their condition and live fulfilling lives.

DIAGNOSIS

DLD is a common but often unseen disability. It is not routinely screened for in educational settings, unlike vision, hearing, and reading problems. This means that many children with DLD go undiagnosed and untreated.

The diagnosis of DLD typically begins with a concerned adult who notices problems with a child's communication skills. This adult could be a parent, family member, teacher, or pediatrician. Some warning signs of DLD include:

- Late talking
- Difficulty understanding or following directions
- Poor grammar or word usage
- Difficulty with social conversation
- Delayed expressive language

Once concerns have been raised, a speech-language pathologist (SLP) will conduct an assessment to determine if a child has DLD. The SLP will

look at the child's overall communication skills, including their ability to understand and use language. They will also consider the child's age and developmental level.



If a child is diagnosed with DLD, the SLP will develop an individualized treatment plan. This plan will address the child's specific needs and goals. Treatment for DLD can include:

- Speech therapy

- Language therapy
- Social skills training

Early diagnosis and intervention are essential for children with DLD. With the right support, these children can learn to communicate effectively and reach their full potential.

ASSESSING COMMUNICATION SKILLS IN CHILDREN



The assessment of a child's communication skills is typically conducted by a

speech-language pathologist (SLP).

The nature of the assessment will vary depending on the child's age and the specific concerns that prompted the evaluation. However, the process typically involves three stages:

1. Interview with parents and teachers. The SLP will discuss the child's health and educational background with their parents and teachers. This will help the SLP to get a comprehensive understanding of the child's communication strengths and weaknesses.
2. Observational session. The SLP will observe the child during conversational or storytelling activities. This will help the SLP to identify challenges such as pronunciation difficulties, word retrieval issues, sentence construction, or the inclusion of pertinent information. If the child is school-going, the SLP may also observe the child's interaction in a classroom setting, paying close attention to any difficulties the child may have in comprehending teacher instructions or participating in class discussions.

3. Standardized tests. The child will then undergo a series of standardized tests aimed at contrasting their speech, language, and overall communication skills with expected norms for their age group.

Throughout the evaluation, the SLP will be trying to answer two fundamental questions:

1. Does the child demonstrate a marked deficiency in any aspect of speech, language, or overall communication compared to peers of the same age?
2. If such a deficiency exists, does it impede the child's ability to function

effectively in social, emotional, or academic contexts?

If both answers are affirmative, the SLP will further define the nature of the problem. This may entail additional testing to discern if the issue lies within areas like Childhood Apraxia of Speech or DLD.

If DLD is identified, it might be necessary to consult other professionals for diagnosing potential comorbid conditions such as Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder, or to exclude potential causes like Intellectual Disability, Hearing Loss, or Autism Spectrum Disorder.

Remember, a majority of DLD cases lack a discernible cause. Regardless, diagnosing and treating these DLD cases remains paramount.

COMPUTATIONAL LANGUAGE ASSESSMENT TECHNOLOGY



Computational language assessment technology can greatly facilitate the assessment of a child's communication abilities in several ways. Here are a few possibilities:

- **Online Portals such as Open Brain AI and Applications:** These allow the automatic evaluation of speech productions, the comparison of with healthy productions, and the easy tracking of a child's progress over time.

- **Speech Recognition Software:** This type of software can aid in documenting specific speech features. Some advanced programs can even provide real-time feedback about pronunciation and articulation.

- **Assistive Communication Devices:** For children

with severe speech-language disorders, these devices can be used during the assessment. They can facilitate communication and demonstrate the child's comprehension level, even when their verbal speech is significantly impaired.

CONCLUSION

The assessment of a child's communication skills is an important part of the diagnostic process for speech-language disorders. By using a variety of methods, SLPs can get a comprehensive understanding of the child's strengths and weaknesses. This information can then be used to develop an individualized treatment plan

that will help the child to reach their full potential.

MORE INFORMATION

- American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA): www.asha.org
- National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders (NIDCD): <https://www.nidcd.nih.gov/>
- The Kennedy Krieger Institute: <https://www.kennedykrieger.org>



Sickness is an impediment that affects the body, not what you choose to do (...) choose to follow this for all the things that happen to you: because you will realize that it impedes something else and not yourself.

Epictetus