



Empowering Children. Supporting Families. Building Brighter Futures.

Resource 018 | Speech and language disorders

Childhood apraxia of speech

What it means

Childhood apraxia of speech (CAS) is a motor speech disorder affecting planning and programming the movements for speech. Speech muscles are not necessarily weak. Children may know what they want to say but have difficulty coordinating reliable sound sequences. CAS can coexist with language and other developmental needs. [1]

Causes and risk factors

CAS may occur without an identified cause, with some genetic or neurodevelopmental conditions, or after neurological injury. A child is not causing inconsistent speech intentionally. Very limited speech in a young toddler can make a confident diagnosis difficult; specialists may use a provisional description while providing support. [1,2]

General family education. A concern deserves assessment, but this guide does not diagnose a child or prescribe treatment.



Signs and everyday impact

Features can include inconsistent sound errors across repeated words, difficulty moving smoothly between sounds or syllables, and unusual stress or rhythm. Longer words may be harder. No single feature proves CAS, and similar signs can occur in other speech disorders. [1,2]

Assessment and diagnosis

A speech-language pathologist with motor speech expertise assesses repeated productions, movement transitions, prosody, response to cues, and speech in different contexts. Language, hearing, and oral structures are reviewed. The clinician distinguishes CAS from phonological disorder and dysarthria, and considers medical or genetics referrals when indicated. [1,2]

Treatment and therapy

Treatment usually involves individualized motor-based speech practice with carefully selected words, many useful repetitions, and appropriate cueing. Frequency and intensity depend on the child, goals, and response. AAC can provide reliable communication alongside speech treatment. Nonspeech mouth exercises alone do not treat the speech planning difficulty. [1,2,3]

Support at home

Practice only the targets and cues demonstrated by the therapist, in short successful moments. Accept signs, pictures, devices, and speech equally as communication. Avoid demanding repeated performances when the child is tired or frustrated.

When to seek help

Regression, new muscle weakness, seizures, or feeding and swallowing changes require medical review. Sudden speech loss or neurological symptoms needs urgent assessment.

Questions for your care team

- How confident is the diagnosis, and what findings support it?
- Which motor speech approach and practice dose fit this child?
- What AAC support will keep communication accessible now?



Podcast preparation

Use this outline to develop a later podcast script.

Suggested opening

Welcome to Mariel Early Intervention. Today we discuss childhood apraxia of speech. Childhood apraxia of speech (CAS) is a motor speech disorder affecting planning and programming the movements for speech. This is general education; each child needs individualized care.

Opening: Define the topic and its developmental context.

Understanding: Explain causes and signs without inviting self-diagnosis.

Assessment: Describe evaluation and distinguish screening from diagnosis.

Support: Discuss treatment, therapy, and practical family supports.

Closing: Explain urgent signs and one clear next step.

Misconception to address: CAS is not simply laziness, delayed speech, or weak tongue muscles.

Before recording: update clinical references and local service details, arrange clinical review, and use fully consented or fictional examples.

Terms in plain language

- Motor planning: organizing movements before carrying them out.
- Prosody: speech rhythm, stress, and intonation.
- Provisional: a working description subject to review.

Sources and further reading

Sources accessed 3 October 2026. Numbered references support the clinical overview. Treatment availability and referral routes vary by country.

[1] Childhood Apraxia of Speech

<https://www.asha.org/practice-portal/clinical-topics/childhood-apraxia-of-speech/>

[2] Childhood Apraxia of Speech

<https://www.asha.org/policy/TR2007-00278/>

[3] A Tool for Differential Diagnosis of Childhood Apraxia of Speech and Dysarthria in Children: A Tutorial

https://pubs.asha.org/doi/10.1044/2022_LSHSS-21-00164