



**Speech Path of Brevard** is dedicated to educating parents, teachers, caregivers, medical professionals and the community at large about Swallowing and Speech disorders among young children.

### **Why It Matters:**

If left untreated, swallowing disorders – called Dysphagia - can affect overall nutrition and cause a number of other health issues, including:

- Dehydration
- Poor nutrition
- Aspiration (food or liquid entering the airway)
- Pneumonia
- Repeated upper respiratory infections that can lead to chronic lung disease
- Embarrassment or isolation in social situations involving eating

Speech/Language disorders are closely correlated with later learning and socialization, which could result in:

- Difficulty learning
- Trouble reading
- Social isolation/ depression
- Frustration when trying to communicate with family members, friends & teachers

### **Warning Signs:**

If your child displays any combination of the following symptoms, you should consider visiting us for an initial consultation:

#### Speech and Language Disorders, and Stuttering

- Does not smile or interact with others (birth and older)
- Does not babble (4-7 months)
- Makes only a few sounds or gestures, like pointing (7-12 months)
- Does not understand what others say (7 months – 2 years)
- Says only a few words (12-18 months)
- Words are not easily understood (18 months – 2 years)
- Pauses a lot while talking and/or stretches sounds out (2.5 – 3 years)
- Produces speech that is unclear, even to familiar people (2-3 years)
- Has trouble with early reading and writing skills (2.5 – 3 years)

#### Swallowing

- A wet or “gurgly” voice
- Spoken or nonverbal expressions about fear of eating, swallowing or choking
- Holding food or liquid in the mouth without swallowing

- A delay in swallowing after food has been chewed
- Food left in the mouth after swallowing or finishing a meal
- Coughing during/after a meal
- Fatigue or exhaustion after or during a meal
- Significant weight loss over time

### **Treatment:**

Early intervention is the key to lifelong success with speech language disorders. Most treatments are covered by insurance or early intervention programs offered at the school level.

After an initial, complimentary assessment, a Speech Path of Brevard Language Pathologist will guide you on how to monitor, support and encourage your child's speech development and progress.

A Video fluoroscopic Swallowing Study, or VFSS, may be recommended and can help your pathologist understand:

- Whether food is traveling into your child's airway instead of her stomach - called *aspiration*
- What parts of your child's mouth and throat may not be working at an optimal level
- What types of food and liquids are safest for your child
- Whether certain feeding positions or strategies may help your child swallow better

Based on test results, a treatment protocol will be developed by the experienced staff at Speech Path of Brevard with parental/guardian input. Plans typically include combining office visits for therapy with follow up exercises to be completed at home.

If your child needs more aggressive treatment, Speech Path of Brevard is a certified provider of VitalStim Therapy, a non-invasive electrical stimulation used on the throat and neck to increase muscle strength and the effectiveness of exercise therapy.

If you are concerned about your child's ability to speak or swallow, please contact Speech Path of Brevard for a no-obligation evaluation.

**To schedule a consultation, contact us anytime:**



321-622-8792

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