

Developmental Language Disorder

Developmental language disorder (DLD) is identified when a child has difficulties in the understanding or usage of language. Children with language disorders may find it challenging to follow instructions, answer questions, form grammatical sentences and/or use a wide range of vocabulary.

The cause of DLD is often unknown. Some known causes may include premature birth, intellectual disabilities or neglect.

Language disorders have been found to result in long-term negative impacts on literacy abilities, academic performance, and employment outcomes. Additionally, children with language disorders may face social and emotional challenges, especially if their disorder is not picked up early and they do not access appropriate intervention in a timely manner. Due to the difficulties in communicating with others, children with language disorders may present as having attention difficulties, behavioural difficulties and/or poor social skills. With time, these difficulties may lead to increased anxiety and frustration.

With proper intervention and psychosocial support, children with language disorders can improve in their ability to communicate effectively and confidently with others.

How is it treated?

After a comprehensive assessment of a child's language abilities, the speech therapist and the child's family will come together to formulate a personalised therapy plan specific to the child's needs.

What does rehabilitation involve?

The overall aim of rehabilitation is to improve a child's understanding and expression, such that he or she is able to communicate more effectively with others. In addition, rehabilitation also includes educating and equipping parents, teachers and other caregivers with the necessary skills to better support the child's language learning and development.

Treatment involves regular therapy sessions with a speech therapist to improve the child's language skills. For younger children, treatment may be led by the parents, with the speech therapist providing training, support and consultation.

A comprehensive language assessment will be conducted to identify the child's specific profile of strengths and weaknesses. Following this, individualised goals will be set for each child and specific targeted intervention will be provided on a regular basis to work on the child's areas of difficulty. This may involve having the speech therapist working directly with the child or training the parents to work with the child. After each session, the therapist will assign home-based tasks to reinforce taught concepts.

Useful websites

[Preschool Language Disorders](#)

[Speech and Language Therapy \(Speech and Language Therapy Singapore SALTS Website\)](#)