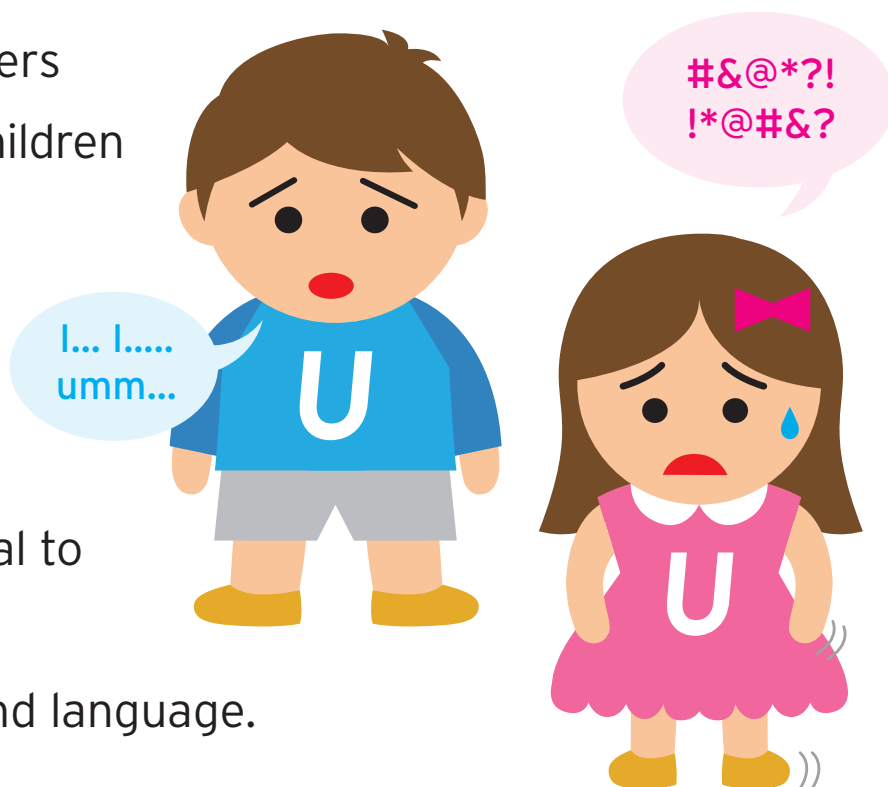


# What to know about speech disorders

Speech and sound disorders affect 8 to 9 percent of children in the U.S. Depending on the child's age and the underlying cause of the impairment, early intervention can be critical to preventing long-standing difficulties with speech and language.



## Types of speech disorders

### Speech articulation:

Omitting/distorting sounds or substituting one sound for another.

### Voice:

Abnormal vocal skills; changes in voice quality may indicate ongoing disorder.

### Language:

Affects use or understanding of language; may affect social communication and ability to understand body language.

### Fluency:

Stuttering or abnormal speech production (common among pre-schoolers); if lasts for more than a few months, it may indicate a more severe, ongoing disorder.

## Diagnosis

If your child exhibits delayed speech and language development, it is important to schedule a full hearing examination with your pediatrician. One in four children will have some degree of hearing loss in their life and nearly 6 percent will be diagnosed with a specific language impairment.

From there, a speech-language evaluation with a licensed speech pathologist may be necessary to assess voice, fluency, and speech and language.



## Treatment

Children between the ages of 1 and 4 with speech difficulties are often treated through play-based speech therapy. As they get older, therapy may continue to utilize games, art and music in addition to more structured techniques such as oral-motor assessments, language interventions or speech practice — depending on the type of speech disorder, the cause and the therapist.

