

## Articulation

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### What is articulation?

Articulation refers to movements of the articulators – tongue, soft palate, jaws, teeth, lips. Problems with any of these lead to an articulation disorder affecting intelligibility to varying degrees.

Problems may be:

- **structural** – for example, cleft lip and palate
- **orthodontic** – for example, protruding upper teeth, micrognathia (very small lower jaw), short soft palate
- **neurological** – for example, dysarthria, where the range of movement in tongue and lips is restricted. This may be specific to the articulators or more usually associated with a general condition such as cerebral palsy or stroke.

Difficulties may also be due to head injury or facial injuries or dyspraxia where movements cannot be organised (see Afasic Glossary Sheets on dysarthria and dyspraxia).

Therapy concentrates on improving the range, rate and accuracy of movement, but severe problems may require alternative or augmentative communication. Orthodontic treatment or corrective surgery may also be necessary.

In any articulation problem it is important to have a comprehensive assessment carried out by a speech and language therapist who can also refer on to an ENT surgeon or orthodontist and can recommend appropriate alternative or augmentative communication.

### References

**Grunwell, P (Ed.)** (1990), *Developmental speech disorders*. London: Whurr

**Dockrell, J, & Messer, D** (1999), *Children's language and communication difficulties*. London: Cassell

**Fleming, P, Miller, C, & Wright, J** (1997), *Speech and language difficulties in education*. Bicester: Winslow

**Martin, D, & Miller, C** (1996), *Speech and language difficulties in the classroom*. London: David Fulton

*Please note: Afasic does not hold copies of any referenced material. However, it may be obtained via academic libraries.*

### Other relevant Glossary Sheets

- Alternative/augmentative communication (9)
- Dyspraxia (18)
- Dysarthria (21)

### Other organisations which can help

Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists (RCSLT)  
2 White Hart Yard  
London  
SE1 1NX  
Tel: 020 7378 1200

The speech and language therapy service of your local health trust. Details appear in the business section of the telephone directory, under 'Health' and the name of the board or trust.

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