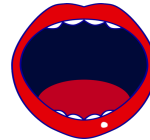




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ARTICULATION



Articulation is movement of the parts of the body that produce sounds for speech. The parts of the body used for speech are called the articulators and include the lips, teeth, jaw, cheeks, tongue, hard palate, soft palate, and larynx. The articulators work together to produce each sound that you say. The movements of the articulators must be coordinated and precise to produce sounds correctly. When articulators are placed in the wrong spot, sounds are not pronounced correctly and words may be difficult to understand.

Children may say some sounds incorrectly as they are learning to talk. Some sounds, like p, m, or w are learned earlier, while other sounds may take longer to master, like z, r, or th. Most children can say the majority of speech sounds correctly by the time they are 4 years of age. A child who does not produce sounds correctly by the expected age may have a speech sound disorder. “articulation disorder” or “phonological disorder” may be terms used to describe these sound disorders.

Articulation disorders involve the motor (movement) aspect of speech and focus on errors (substitutions or distortions) made while producing individual speech sounds. A common example of this would be placing the tongue between the teeth for the “s” sound, making it sound more like a “th” (“sun” turns into “thun”). Phonological disorders involve a predictable pattern of errors when producing groups of sounds (for example, “fronting”, or substituting sounds produced in the front of the mouth for sounds made in the back of the mouth: “tup” for “cup”, “dot” for “got”). Sometimes, it is difficult to determine if error sounds are produced as the result of an articulation disorder or a phonological process.

Since articulation disorders affect the movements of the articulators, therapy often focuses on correcting these movements. The Speech-Language Pathologist (SLP) may use modeling, verbal or gesture prompts, or visual aids (such as a mirror) to show the child where the articulators are placed to produce a sound, Other times they may use tools to provide tactile (touch) feedback, such as tapping a tongue depressor behind the teeth so the child knows where to place their tongue for the “s” sound. The goal of speech therapy is to train the articulators to produce the sounds correctly. Treatment approaches vary depending on your child’s age, ability, and the type of the disorder.

If you have questions, contact the team of Speech-Language Pathologists at Wee Speech, P.C.