

About Childhood Apraxia of Speech (CAS)

What is CAS?

Childhood Apraxia of Speech (CAS) is a type of speech sound disorder. You may have also heard it called Developmental Verbal Dyspraxia. CAS is not a speech delay but is a significant speech sound disorder. Children have difficulty producing sounds, sequencing sounds and using varied intonation and stress making them very hard to understand. Children with CAS are even hard to understand by close family members. The cause of CAS is unknown, but it can run in families. CAS involves difficulties in the way the brain deals with messages about how to move parts of our mouth, even though the muscles and nerves are fine. Children with CAS sometimes also have other coordination difficulties such as with reading, writing, eating and drinking and whole-body coordination.

How do I know if my child has CAS?

Around 60 out of every 1,000 children will have a speech sound disorder, but only one in every 1,000 children will have CAS. A speech and language therapist needs to assess your child to diagnose CAS. This may take some time, as the speech and language therapist must rule out other speech sound disorders, such as inconsistent phonological disorder. It is important to get the right diagnosis as different speech sound disorders need different types of therapy.

Does a child with CAS need speech and language therapy?

Yes. Therapy for CAS needs to be individual, regular, and consistent. Speech and language therapists are essential in identification and treatment for individuals with CAS. Collaboration is key and therapists must work with parents and teachers in order to ensure support is tailored and embedded.

How can I help my child with CAS?

It is very important that your child can communicate what they want and need. A speech and language therapist is the best person to do therapy for your child's speech sounds, but in the meantime:

- Focus on **what** your child is saying, rather than **how** they are saying it and support them to get their messages across.
- Encourage your child to use other ways to communicate such as **gesture** or **visuals** such as photos or symbols.
- There is **no** evidence that mouth exercises such as practising blowing or sucking help CAS.

More information is available at [Speech Apraxia UK & International](http://SpeechApraxiaUK.com).