

Lisps

What is a lisp?

A lisp is a type of speech difficulty that can happen when the speaker has learned the incorrect placement or movement of their tongue/lips within the mouth for the sound to be made clearly. This means the sound can have a hissy or slushy quality to it. Having a lisp can sometimes cause the speaker to be misunderstood, or have difficulties getting their message across, but this depends on the severity of the lisp. There are several different types of lisps, some of which are typical for young children to make (under the age of 4½ years.) However, a palatal or lateral lisp is not part of typical speech development and the child may benefit from Speech and Language Therapy to relearn this part of their speech system.

A lisp commonly affects the following sounds: s, z, th, ch, j and sh.



Interdental (frontal) Lisp

- This type of lisp occurs when the tongue protrudes between the front teeth and the air-flow is directed forwards to make the /s/ and /z/ sound like /th/.
- This type of lisp may be present until the child is around 4½ years.
- Interdental /s/ - A /th/ sound replaces the /s/ sound in words: e.g. "soup" is said as "thoop," "missing" as "mithing" or "pass" as "path."
- Interdental /z/ - The /th/ sound replaces the /z/ sound in words: e.g. "zoo" is said as "thoo," "easy" as "ethy" or "buzz" as "buth."

Dentalised Lisp

- A dentalised lisp is a term to describe the way a child produces a certain sound.
- The tongue rests on or pushes against the front teeth, the air-flow is then directed forwards which produces a muffled sound.
- This should have phased out by the time they reach 4½ years old.

Lateral Lisp

- This type of lisp is not found in typical speech development.
- The tongue position for this lisp is very close to the position in how you make /l/, the sound is then produced with the air-flow directed over the sides of the tongue rather than directly forwards.
- This lisp creates a wet or slushy sound to the child's speech when they are talking.
- Lateral lisps can occur on the following speech sounds /s/, /z/, /sh/, /ch/ and /j/.

Palatal Lisp

- This type of lisp is not found in typical speech development.
- The mid-section of the tongue makes contact with the soft palate when trying to produce the sound.
- This type of lisp may sound like a /hy/ sound
- This type of lisp can be made on /s/ and /z/ sounds.
- Examples may include: [zip – hyip], [see – hyee]

How can you help your child with a lisp?

- One simple strategy you can practice is called the exploding/lazy /t/ technique. To begin, say the /t/ sound four times consecutively, and then hold the sound on the last one. It will go something like: t-t-t-tssssss. The /t/ will automatically turn into an /s/ sound. Try another with just one exploding /t/: t-ssss. Finally, see if the /s/ sound can be produced while maintaining that same placement. It will sound correct because the tongue is now in the correct position.
- You can also use a straw and hold it in front of the teeth. Try to make the air come through the straw instead of out the sides of the tongue. You'll quickly notice the difference, as the sound varies considerably depending on where the airflow is directed.
- Help your child watch their tongue placement in the mirror. Model correct tongue placement so that the tip of the tongue only touches slightly behind the teeth, and the body of the tongue is positioned lower in the mouth instead of touching the roof of the mouth.
- Practise saying the 'ee' vowel and then the 's' sound as this will help with getting the tongue in the correct position.
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Take a look at the 'speech' page on our website for more advice www.coventrychildrensslt.co.uk

