

## Lisps

### **What is a lisp?**

A lisp happens when a child pushes their tongue too far forward between the front teeth so that the 's' and 'sh' sounds are more like 'th'. For example, the word 'sock' might sound like 'thock' or the word 'shoe' like 'thoo'.

We call this an 'interdental lisp' because the tongue goes between the front teeth. This type of lisp is common in children until about the age of 5 years and is part of typical speech development.



There is another type of lisp called a 'lateral lisp'. This is where you hear the air escaping out the sides of the tongue. This type of lisp is not a part of typical development, and the child may benefit from some support from a Speech and Language Therapist.

### **My child has a lisp, what can I do to help?**

There are lots of things you can do at home to help your child with a lisp:

- Model the right way to say a word e.g. if your child says 'I want to wear the blue **thock**' you can say 'you want the blue **sock**?', using a nice clear 's' sound. This means that your child is hearing the right way to say words. Don't worry if they can't copy you in the right way, they may not be ready yet.
- Play games like 'I Spy' together, finding things that begin with the 's' sound and the 'th' sound. Talk about the sounds that words begin with so that you are helping them to notice the difference.
- If your child is willing and able, use a mirror to demonstrate how the tongue stays behind the teeth when making a 's' sound.
- Choose 4 or 5 simple 's' words that you and your child say lots each day. For example, 'sock', 'sandwich', 'soap', 'sit down' or any family/friends names starting with 's'. When saying these words talk about the 's' sound and emphasise it. Your child can have a go at copying you if they are

able to, but avoid putting too much pressure on them if they are not ready.

- If your child uses a dummy or bottle, try to minimise this during the day.



Remember that most children grow out of lisps when they are ready. Your child's progress will depend on the severity of the lisp, their awareness of it and their motivation to change.

If you are still concerned about your child's lisp please contact the Early Years Speech and Language Therapy Service on **020 3316 1897** or by emailing **whh-tr.IslingtonEarlyYearsSLT@nhs.net**