

# LANDAU-KLEFFNER SYNDROME

## What is Landau-Kleffner Syndrome?

- A rare, childhood neurological disorder that is characterized by:
  - A sudden or gradual development of aphasia (an impairment of understanding and expressing language) in children between 5 and 7 years old
  - Abnormal brain activity and an abnormal record of the electrical activity in the brain
  - Seizures during sleep (in some, but not all, cases)
- LKS may be confused with autism, but unlike autism, symptoms of LKS appear later in childhood and do not include social difficulties

## How Does LKS Affect Communication?

- First sign of language loss is when a child appears to not understand what is said – known as “word deafness”
- Child may not recognize familiar sounds, such as bells, whistles, or a ringing telephone
- Symptoms may suggest a hearing loss, but in LKS, hearing is normal
- Children with LKS will...
  - Produce shorter, simpler sentences
  - Have difficulty remembering a word
  - Have difficulty producing the right sounds
  - Sometimes have a strange voice quality

### Social Effects

- Poor social skills resulting from limited ability to communicate with peers
- Social isolation
- Emotional disturbances

### Behavior

May have behavior issues (e.g. tantrums) stemming from frustration with inability to communicate



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## Role of the Speech-Language Pathologist (SLP)

- Teach an alternative to spoken language, such as sign language
- Teach the use of an augmentative communication system, such as a speech-generating device
- Collaborate with teachers to set up the classroom in the best way to help the child
  - Have the child sit close to the teacher
  - Install an FM system where wires in the classroom capture sound and make it louder for the child
  - Use cued speech where the teacher incorporates gestures to help the child understand what is being said

## Classroom Modifications

- Speak in short and easy to understand phrases
- Use visual support (e.g. pictures or sign language) when possible
- Use a visual schedule so the child can see what they will be doing during the day
  - This can ease transition between daily activities
- Have a classroom aide “pre-teach” materials for a lesson to the child
- Allow the child to use his or her AAC device in all settings

## Prognosis

- Can be unpredictable
- Some children make a full recovery, while others may have permanent difficulty with language and communication
- Children may also relapse and lose their language abilities again

Prognosis is better when:

- Symptoms appear after age 6
- A child begins receiving speech and language services earlier



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