

# Speech and Language Therapy Department

## Apraxia of Speech Information Leaflet

You have been given this leaflet because you or someone you know has apraxia of speech. This leaflet will explain the symptoms of apraxia of speech and what you can do to help.

### What is apraxia of speech?

Apraxia is difficulty in carrying out planned movements. A person with apraxia may be able to carry out automatic movements but not planned movements. For example, they may be able to yawn (automatic) but be unable to open their mouth when asked (planned).

Speaking involves a complex set of muscle movement patterns. **Apraxia of speech** is thought to be caused by a problem in the brain area responsible for planning these movements. The muscles are not weak but they will not work properly when the person tries to speak.

Apraxia of speech can be extremely frustrating. The person usually knows what they want to say. When they try to say it, it may come out wrong or not come out at all. They may be able to say a word correctly one minute but next time it comes out all wrong.

Frequently the person with apraxia will have difficulties with conversational speech. However they may be good at 'automatic' speech tasks such as counting, swearing, repeating rhymes, greetings and farewells.

Apraxia of speech can occur on its own, but more often it is accompanied by language difficulties (aphasia).

### Can the person with apraxia of speech understand what I'm saying?

Apraxia of speech does not, in itself, affect a person's understanding. However it often occurs alongside language difficulties (aphasia) so the person may have difficulty understanding what is said to them or with finding words.

### What are the symptoms of apraxia of speech?

The symptoms of apraxia of speech vary according to the severity of the disorder. The person with apraxia may:

- struggle to pronounce words correctly
- be able to say a word correctly one minute, but not the next
- have more difficulties with the beginning of words
- have more problem with longer words than shorter words
- be aware of their mistakes but often be unable to correct them
- speak more slowly
- be better at 'automatic' speech tasks such as counting and singing

## **What can I do to help a person with apraxia of speech?**

A person with apraxia of speech needs support and encouragement with their communication. Friends and family can help by:

- Showing patience and understanding
- Reducing distractions and background noise
- Giving the person plenty of time to speak
- Encouraging the person to use other forms of communication to support their speech, e.g. gesture, writing, drawing

## **Where can I go for more information?**

Your local speech and language therapist will be able to provide you with more information about apraxia of speech.

Details:

Speech and Language Therapy Department  
Norfolk and Norwich University Hospital  
Colney Lane, Norwich  
NR4 7UY

**Tel: 01603 287117 (working hours 08.30-16.30 Mon-Fri)**