

Speech and Language Therapy Department Dysarthria Information Leaflet

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



What is dysarthria?

Dysarthria is a difficulty with speaking caused by weakness and/or incoordination of the muscles in the face, mouth or throat.



Can the person with dysarthria understand what I'm saying?

Dysarthria does not in itself affect a person's understanding. However sometimes it can occur alongside language difficulties (aphasia). If this is the case, the person may have difficulty understanding what is said to them.



What are the symptoms of dysarthria?

A person with dysarthria may have:

- Slurred speech.
- Hoarse voice.
- Difficulties controlling the rate of their speech.
- Difficulties controlling or coordinating breathing for speech.
- Speech that sounds too loud or too soft.
- Lack of intonation – 'flat' sounding speech.
- Facial weakness.
- Dribbling/drooling.



What can a person with dysarthria do to help make their speech clearer?

- Stay calm and relaxed when speaking.
- Take a deep breath before starting to talk.
- Face the person they are talking to and sit in good light.
- Speak slowly and carefully, concentrating on over-exaggerating all the sounds, e.g. news-pa-per.
- Keep sentences short.
- Support speech with other forms of communication e.g. gesture, writing, drawing.
- Pause frequently and take extra breaths.
- Get the listener's attention e.g. by saying their name.

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- Think ahead about what you are going to say.



What can I do to help a person with dysarthria?

A person with dysarthria 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 speak slowly and deliberately.
- Letting the person know if they have not been understood.
- If you haven't understood, ask them to repeat it, or encourage them to write the message down or use gesture to support their communication.



Where can I go for more information?

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

Details:

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

Tel: 01603 287117 (answerphone, we aim to get back to you within 2 working days)

