



A guide to...

Dysarthria *Patient Information*

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What is Dysarthria?

Dysarthria is a difficulty in producing speech due to muscle weakness and/or poor coordination of the speech mechanism.

How does it affect my speech?

It usually affects:

- articulation (speech sounds more slurred)
- the control of volume (speech sounds quiet or too loud)
- vocal quality (speech sounds hoarse)
- rate and coordination of speech (speech sounds monotonous and in turn people may find it difficult to hear).

What can I do?

Here are some tips to help communicate-some suggestions may be more useful than others. Your speech and language therapist will highlight those strategies that are likely to be of particular benefit to you.

Coping Strategies

1. **Slow down your rate of speech:** As the muscles of speech have weakened, they require more time to do the same job effectively. Your listener will be able to understand you more easily if you speak slowly.
2. **Pause frequently:** This will help to stop words running together and stop your voice fading away. It will also make your speech less effortful.
3. **Break down long words:** When trying to say a long word, it helps to break it down into individual syllables which should be pronounced deliberately and separately.
E.g. cal-en-dar tel-e-vi-sion af-ter-noon
4. **Careful articulation:** Some of your consonants may not sound as sharp and clear as before. Try to exaggerate the production of the speech sounds that you find difficult. You may be given lists of words and phrases that you can practice reading aloud.
5. **Use shorter sentences:** You may find it easier to improve and maintain clarity if you speak in shorter sentences.
6. **Swallow regularly:** If saliva/spit builds up in your mouth, make sure you swallow or remove it with a tissue so that it doesn't interfere with articulation.
7. **Be short and to the point:** It helps to think ahead about what you want to say.

Adapt to your surroundings ?

1. Avoid speaking in noisy surroundings. Turn the noise off or move to a quieter place if possible.
2. Establish eye contact before you start to speak so that you know the other person is listening.
3. Make sure your face and lips can be clearly seen by maintaining good posture (sitting upright with head in midline) and sitting in a good light.
4. Make sure your listener is sitting close to you. Avoid talking to someone across the room, or from another room.

If you would like to discuss the information in this leaflet further, please speak to your speech and language therapist.