

## Patient information

# Communicating with people with dysarthria

## Information for family, friends and carers

### What is dysarthria?

Dysarthria is a motor speech disorder that causes difficulty with speech. It results in weakness, stiffness or incoordination of the speech muscles, including the lips, jaw, soft palate or larynx.

### Some difficulties may include:

- Reduced facial expression
- Reduced clarity of speech, i.e. 'slurred speech'
- Reduce range of pitch, i.e. speech sounding monotonous
- Nasal quality to speech
- Changes to the volume of voice, i.e. loud or quiet voice
- Changes to the rate of speech, i.e. fast or slow speech
- Difficulty controlling breathing during speech

### How can you help your friend/relative with dysarthria?

*Seek advice from the Speech and Language Therapist about your friend/relative's communication. They can provide you with strategies to make communication easier for both of you.*

## General strategies for clearer speech include:

- Reduce distractions and background noise, e.g. turn off the TV while speaking.
- Make sure you are facing the individual's face and mouth while they are speaking.
- Encourage them to sit/stand upright and take a deep breath before speaking.
- Give the individual plenty of time to speak, don't rush them.
- Encourage them to speak slowly and loudly.
- Encourage them to over-articulate each sound in each word, e.g. te-le-phone or ma-ga-zine
- Politely ask them to repeat if necessary.
- Encourage them to use gesture, pointing, body language and writing down key words alongside what they are saying to help get their message across.



If you would like to speak to a member of the **Speech and Language Therapy team**, please call us on **(01284) 713303** and we will aim to find a mutually convenient time.

*If you would like any information regarding access to the West Suffolk Hospital and its facilities please visit the website for AccessAble (the new name for DisabledGo)*  
<https://www.accessable.co.uk/organisations/west-suffolk-nhs-foundation-trust>



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