

## Patient information

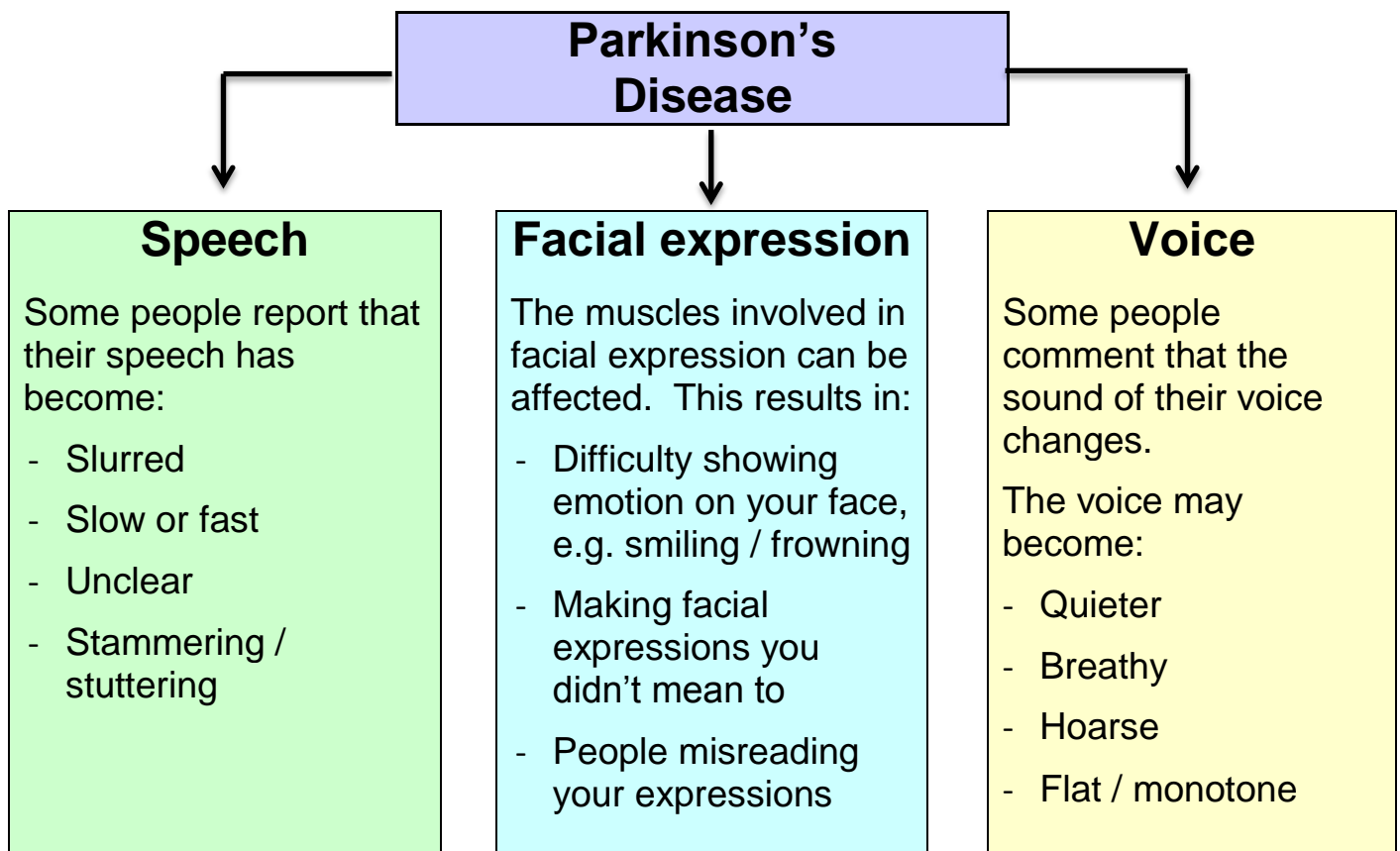
# Parkinson's Disease

## *Coping with and managing advice from Speech and Language Therapists*

Parkinson's Disease is a progressive neurological disorder. It occurs due to a reduced amount of dopamine in the brain. Dopamine is a chemical that helps control movement.

### How can Parkinson's Disease affect communication?

Some people with Parkinson's Disease may notice that they are having difficulty communicating with other people. Parkinson's can affect communication in different ways.



# Advice from Speech and Language Therapists

Here are some general tips:

## 1 To help improve speech/voice

- **Speak slowly**
- **Keep sentences short:** pause and take a breath before starting the next sentence.
- **Stress each key word in the sentence:** this will help you get the main point of your sentence across.
- **Over-pronounce the sounds of words:** This will make them sound clearer to your listener.
- **Speak louder:** many people with Parkinson's don't realise they are speaking quietly, so it might be better to feel that you are speaking too loudly than too softly.
- **Rest your voice:** allow some time to rest your voice throughout the day.

## 2 Making changes to the environment can also be helpful

- Sit in a well-lit area
- Face your speaker; this will improve the listener's ability to lip-read.
- Keep background noise to a minimum; turn off the TV, turn down the radio.
- Attract your listener's attention before speaking.

## 3 Using other ways of communicating

- **Writing:** if you are able to write, always carry a paper and pen so you can write down what you are trying to say.
- **Alphabet board:** if writing is difficult, use an alphabet board to spell words if they are not understood.
- **Gesture:** pointing and hand gestures can help get your message across.

- **Picture charts:** personalised picture charts can also be useful.
- **Apps / assistive devices:** There are various apps and assistive devices available to assist people with communication. However, they may not be suitable for everyone. It is recommended that you ask a Speech and Language Therapist first.

## How listeners can help

Here are some ways in which listeners can help someone if they are having difficulty speaking:

- Face to face: look at the person as he or she is talking.
- Yes / no questions: ask the person simple questions that require a 'yes' or 'no' answer.
- Be patient: allow time for the person to get their message across.
- Encourage other ways of communication: eg gesture / pointing / writing.
- If you haven't understood what someone has said, ask them to repeat it but louder, or in another way.
- Try not to pretend you have understood if you haven't.

## How Parkinson's Disease affects swallowing

Parkinson's Disease can also have an effect on swallowing drinks and/or food. Some warning signs of swallowing difficulties include:

- Choking or coughing when eating and drinking
- Dribbling / drooling
- Mealtimes taking much longer than they used to
- Difficulty chewing food
- Feeling of food getting 'caught in your throat'
- Difficulty / delay in starting to swallow

- Recurring chest infections
- Weight loss

## What to do if you have difficulty swallowing

If you notice any of these problems, please contact your Speech and Language Therapist or GP. A Speech and Language Therapist will be able to assess your swallow, identify any swallowing difficulties and provide you with information on how to eat/drink safely.

General tips:

- Allow extra time for meals
- Cut up food well
- Add extra moisture, eg add sauce to food
- Chew food well before swallowing
- Make sure you are sitting fully upright and are fully alert when eating / drinking
- Take small sips / mouthfuls at a time
- A Speech and Language Therapist may also recommend modifying your drinks/food, eg eating softer foods or thickening your drinks. This would be done under their guidance and with regular reviews.

*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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