

Dysarthria

Dysarthria refers to a motor speech disorder caused by brain injury or nerve damage, which may result in paralysis, weakness, or incoordination of the muscles of the lips, tongue, soft palate, larynx and/or breathing mechanism.

Motor speech complaints in post-polio individuals include:¹⁰³

- Hypernasality;
- Intermittent aphonia;
- Reduced volume; and
- Hoarseness.

The major speech change reported by individuals with a history of polio is increased nasal resonance. This hypernasality is due to insufficient contact of the soft palate with the posterior pharyngeal wall, which allows air to escape into the nasopharynx during speech. The soft palate may be asymmetric or hemiparetic or the muscle of the hypopharynx may be weakened. Weakness of respiratory muscles and the effects of fatigue on other musculature often cause increased hoarseness, lowered pitch or volume, or loss of voice.¹⁰¹