



ABIOS

Acquired Brain Injury Outreach Service

FACTSHEET: **Communication**

Audience: Professionals

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Dysarthria following Acquired Brain Injury

“Dysarthria is muscle weakness, paralysis or poor coordination of the breathing and speech muscles and can affect a person’s speech volume or cause them to slur their speech”.

(Speech Pathology Australia)

People with dysarthria are able to understand what others are saying to them and know what they want to say, however their speech may be difficult for the listener to understand.

Signs of dysarthria:

- Slurred speech
- Nasal speech
- Hoarse voice
- Difficulty controlling the volume of speech (may be too loud or too soft)
- Monotone speech quality (speech is all in one tone)
- Difficulty eating and drinking
- Difficulty controlling saliva (drooling)
- The speed of your speech is difficult to control

What you can do to help someone with dysarthria:

- be patient and provide encouragement
- help the person to practice their exercises
- remind the person to speak slowly & clearly, and to take their time
- don't pretend to understand if the person's speech is not clear
- ask the person for clarification (E.g. “did you say....”) or to repeat words if you are unsure
- educate others about dysarthria and effective communication tips such as those above



Strategies you can suggest to someone with dysarthria to use for clearer speech:

- ✚ Complete any exercises prescribed by a Speech Pathologist for : face and lips, tongue, jaw, palate, voice, breathing and / or speech
- ✚ Remain relaxed as possible when speaking
- ✚ Take a deep breath before starting to speak
- ✚ Speak slowly, concentrating on making each word clear
- ✚ Face the person they are speaking with – to help the listener see their face / mouth
- ✚ Speak for themselves whenever possible – not letting others speak for them or finish their sentences
- ✚ Use short phrases or sentences
- ✚ Try to say their message another way (use a different word that is easier to say)
- ✚ Give the listener a 'key word' to tune them into what topic they are talking about
- ✚ Use writing or gestures (to add non-verbal information to their speech)
- ✚ Reduce background noise as much as possible
- ✚ Think about where they meet others in the community (make the environment work for them)