



**Royal Berkshire**  
NHS Foundation Trust

# **Dysarthria**

Information for patients,  
relatives and carers

Compassionate

Aspirational

Resourceful

Excellent

---

**This leaflet explains what dysarthria is, how it may affect you, and what help and support is available for patients with dysarthria.**

---

## **What is dysarthria?**

**Dysarthria** is a speech disorder caused by weakness and/or paralysis of the oral muscles, e.g. the jaw, lips, tongue and / or palate (the 'roof of your mouth').

Common causes of dysarthria include stroke, head and neck cancer and degenerative diseases.

## **What does dysarthria sound like?**

This will vary depending on the cause of dysarthria and where the damage is. Common features include:

- Reduced clarity of speech.
- Abnormal rate of speech, e.g. too fast/slow.
- Change in voice quality, e.g. voice low in pitch, hoarse, quiet, breathy, nasal or strained.
- Reduced naturalness, i.e. lack of speech rhythm or intonation.
- Un-coordinated speech and breathing.

## Top tips for communication

- **Minimise background noise** and distractions.
- **Relax** and take your time.
- **Slow down** your speech and **emphasise important words**.
- **Break down longer words**.
- Use **short sentences** and frequent **pauses for breath**.
- Use **pointing, drawing** and/or **writing** to support your speech.

## Friends and family can help by...

- Checking that you have understood the person by feeding back what you think has been said.
- Asking whether the person minds if you help by guessing or finishing off words for them. They may prefer to keep trying themselves.
- Encouraging the person to use gesture/pointing, writing and/or drawing to support their speech if needed.
- Look at the person's lips/face for additional clues.
- Be honest – let the person know if you have not understood them.

## **How can speech and language therapists help?**

- Assess speech and provide personalised therapy.
- Provide reassurance and confidence-building.
- Provide practical advice for communication in everyday, work and social situations.
- Specialist assessment for electronic communication aids in severe cases.
- Provide advice and support for friends and family.

## **Contact us**

Adult Speech and Language Therapy Department  
Level 1 Battle Block, Inpatient Therapies  
Royal Berkshire Hospital  
London Road, Reading RG1 5AN  
**Tel: 0118 322 5205**

To find out more about our Trust visit  
[www.royalberkshire.nhs.uk](http://www.royalberkshire.nhs.uk)

**Please ask if you need this information in another language or format.**

Speech & Language Therapy, May 2023  
Next review due: May 2025