

- Encourage the person to use different ways of "speaking" — such as pointing, gesturing, drawing simple pictures, or writing down some key words (if they are able to write). Using this suggestion is like giving someone a cane to help them walk.
- Encourage the person to speak in shorter sentences.
- If you still can't understand, try asking questions which can be answered by "yes" or "no." Or ask questions with choices, such as "would you like coffee or tea?"
- Try not to shout. Dysarthria does not affect a person's hearing.
- Don't be too picky. If you understood the person's message, don't worry if it wasn't perfectly spoken.

HOW DO I CONTACT A SPEECH-LANGUAGE PATHOLOGIST?

Speech-language pathologists are employed by hospitals, school boards, public health and community programs.

They also work in private practice. Call your doctor and local agencies for information on services in your area. To locate a private practitioner, visit www.osla.on.ca and click on "Find A Practitioner" call OSLA for a referral at (416) 920-0361/1-800-718-6752

This series written by Justine Hamilton and Deidre Sperry, speech-language pathologists. Adapted with their permission for use by OSLA.

For additional information about Ontario's speech-language pathologists or audiologists, contact:

**Ontario Association of
Speech-Language Pathologists and
Audiologists (OSLA)**

Tel: 416-920-3676
Toll free: 1-800-718-OSLA(6752)

or visit www.osla.on.ca



LEARNING ABOUT

DYSARTHRIA



*One in a series of pamphlets about
Speech-Language after
Illness or Injury to the Brain*

LEARNING ABOUT

DYSARTHRIA

Some illnesses or injuries can cause damage to part of the brain. A stroke is an example, when a blood vessel in the brain gets blocked or when it bursts.

The result can be many different problems, depending on the part and amount of the brain that is damaged.

This pamphlet explains the effect on speech called dysarthria.

- Dysarthria happens when the speech muscles become weak after the illness or injury. It can affect your lips, tongue, throat, or any combination of these.
- Some people with dysarthria have slurred speech. This happens because their tongue cannot move as quickly or as accurately as it used to.
- Other people with dysarthria have a hoarse-sounding voice. The muscles in their voice box do not move as well as they used to.
- Sometimes the dysarthria is very severe and you can barely understand the person's speech. If the dysarthria is mild, it may only affect certain sounds, such as "s," "t" or "ch."
- If someone only has dysarthria, they are able to think just fine. In fact, they can understand you and they know exactly what they want to tell you.

SO WHAT CAN YOU DO TO HELP?

The best thing to do is to speak with the person who has dysarthria and with their speech-language pathologist. They will be able to give you specific ideas about how you can help.

Here are some suggestions to keep in mind when speaking with a person who has dysarthria:

- Stay relaxed and allow the person enough time to speak. The dysarthria will get worse if the person is rushed or excited.
- Make sure the topic of conversation is clearly established.
- Keep a copy of the alphabet handy. To help you understand, the person with dysarthria can point to the first letter of the word they are saying.