

What information is helpful when you request Speech-Language Pathologist?

- a description of the primary concern and reason for requesting services
- medical, social, academic, vocational and other relevant history, including pertinent test results and pending tests or procedures (e.g., CT/MRI scans, audiology assessments, otolaryngology assessments, videofluoroscopic swallowing evaluations)
- reports from previous professional consultations (e.g., speech-language pathology, audiology, otolaryngology, psychology, occupational therapy, physiotherapy, ophthalmology/optometry)

Specific referral requirements vary across settings. In some instances a written physician referral may be required for Speech-Language Pathology evaluation and treatment.

Where can you access rehabilitation services with a Speech-Language Pathologist?

- Hospitals
- Rehabilitation Centres
- Community Programs
- Community Care Access Centres
- Long-Term Care Centres
- Complex Continuing Care Centres
- Private Practice
- Private Health Care Companies

For more information on how you or your client can benefit from the services of a Speech-Language Pathologist, contact:

For additional information about speech-language pathology or audiology, contact our professional association at 416-920-3676 or visit www.osla.on.ca.



SPEECH-LANGUAGE PATHOLOGISTS' ROLES & SERVICES

REHABILITATION



Who are Speech-Language Pathologists?

Speech-language pathologists (SLPs) are skilled, autonomous professionals whose practice is regulated in Ontario by the *Regulated Health Professions Act* and the *Audiology and Speech-Language Pathology Act*. SLPs have specialized knowledge, skills, and clinical training in assessment and management of communication and swallowing disorders, and are integral members of interdisciplinary teams.

What services do Speech-Language Pathologists provide?

Speech-Language Pathology services include prevention, identification, evaluation, and treatment of congenital and acquired communication and swallowing disorders. SLPs counsel patients and their families, as well as train and educate patients, families, caregivers, and students. SLPs are involved in service development, evaluation, and research. SLPs provide services in a broad range of settings to enhance communication and swallowing skills in people of all ages.

Speech-Language Pathology is essential to rehabilitation. Illnesses or injuries that damage the brain, such as stroke, brain injury, or progressive neurological disease (e.g., Parkinson's Disease, Alzheimer's Disease) may result in communication and/or swallowing disorders. Communication disorders include difficulties speaking, understanding, reading, writing, and/or thinking. Swallowing/feeding disorders (dysphagia) include difficulties that can affect respiratory health, maintenance of adequate hydration and nutrition, and/or administration of medication.

Communication and swallowing difficulties may be very noticeable or subtle. Problems may be apparent immediately after the illness or injury, or they may become apparent at a later date.

Speech-Language Pathology Rehabilitation Services

A speech-language pathologist can assess and treat all aspects of a person's communication skills (listening, speaking, reading, writing, conversation skills, non-verbal communication), as well as cognitive or thinking skills that may interfere with a person's ability to communicate effectively (e.g., attention, memory, organization, reasoning, judgment). The SLP can also assess, manage, and treat swallowing/feeding difficulties (dysphagia) to ensure that the person is on a safe diet and not at increased risk for choking food/liquid build-up in the lungs.

Assessment determines how communication, cognitive communication, and swallowing difficulties will affect a person's return to work, school, family interactions, and/or activities in the community.

Therapy may include:

- providing the patient with specific therapies to improve his/her communication and/or swallowing skills, including practice opportunities in a variety of settings and situations
- educating the patient and caregivers on patient abilities and challenges, and various strategies to improve function and help compensate for difficulties implementing augmentative/alternative communication strategies and/or devices
- recommending strategies or changes for the home and/or work environment to enhance patient ability to participate

Assessment and therapy both include working closely with a variety of other professionals in the rehabilitation setting (e.g., dietitians, nurses, occupational therapists, physicians, physiotherapists, psychologists, recreation therapists, respiratory therapists, social workers, vocational counselors)

When should a client be referred to a Speech-Language Pathologist?

Early intervention can make all the difference, so arrangements to see an SLP should be initiated as soon as a concern is identified. Some specific signals that rehabilitation is warranted after an illness or injury include:

- complaint of word-finding difficulties .
- difficulty expressing needs, wants, and feelings
- difficulty discussing events or answering questions in a clear and concise manner
- slurred speech
- hesitant or dysfluent speech (e.g., stuttering)
- difficulty understanding others or following through on instructions
- difficulty using and/or understanding humour
- difficulty reading or writing
- decreased job performance (e.g., difficulty following directions, inappropriate interactions with colleagues
- avoidance of social interaction
- hoarse voice or persistent loss of voice . coughing, choking, or throat clearing when eating or drinking
- "gurgly"/wet sounding voice during or after eating or drinking
- complaints of food getting stuck in the throat or going down the wrong way
- repeated bouts of pneumonia