



# After A Stroke: Speech-Language Pathology (SLP)

---

The Speech-Language Pathologist is part of the medical team who will provide an evaluation for communication and swallowing after stroke. Your Speech-Language Pathologist will use the results of the evaluation to develop your treatment plan during your hospital stay. Before your discharge, the Speech-Language Pathologist will give you recommendations about treatment that will continue after you leave the hospital.

## **How Might Stroke affect me?**

When a stroke occurs, there may be changes in the ability to communicate and/or the ability to eat and drink. There are several types of problems and disorders that may arise:

### **Dysarthria-Motor Speech Disorder**

Dysarthria is difficulty saying words clearly due to muscle weakness that may affect one or both sides of your lips, jaw, tongue and/or soft palate. A change may also occur in movement of your vocal folds in your larynx (voice box) which can change the quality and loudness of your voice.

### **Apraxia-Motor Speech Programming and Sequencing Disorder**

Apraxia is when your brain has difficulty organizing muscle movements. This might affect your ability to speak or to form sounds in correct order when trying to say single words or sentences.

### **Aphasia-Language Disorder**

Aphasia is difficulty understanding what is said, difficulty finding the words and putting words in sentences and difficulty reading and writing words or sentences. Examples of aphasia include difficulties with:

- understanding words, sentences, conversation
- following directions

- reading and understanding the meaning of the words, sentences or paragraphs
- recalling words and/or putting the words in sentences
- writing words or sentences

### **Cognitive-Communication Disorder**

There may be difficulty with thinking and memory after stroke. Examples include difficulties with:

- paying attention
- remembering new information, including your location, time and circumstances
- problem solving
- reasoning or judgement skills
- understanding how you have changed after the stroke.

### **Social Communication Disorder**

The skills for communicating effectively in conversation may be affected. Examples include difficulties with:

- ability to stay on topic
- taking turns in conversation
- inhibiting inappropriate comments

### **Dysphagia – Swallowing Disorder**

Dysphagia is difficulty with swallowing. Examples include difficulty chewing food, clearing all food from your mouth, getting food or liquid from your mouth to your throat, and coughing or choking while eating and/or drinking.

### **How can speech-language treatment help me or my family member?**

Speech-Language Pathologists use many methods to assist people following a stroke. These include methods to improve:

- clarity of speech
- understanding spoken or written words and sentences
- ability to follow directions
- word retrieval/recall

- writing words, sentences
- problem solving and memory skills
- ability to participate in conversations
- swallowing with use of strategies and/or exercises

Speech-Language Pathologists also help the person who has a stroke develop strategies for compensating for speech, language and swallowing disabilities. The SLP staff will work with family members to understand and use prompts and cues that will enhance speech, language, communication or swallowing skills.

### **What can I do to get the most out of treatment for communication and swallowing disorders?**

While it is not possible to reverse injury to the brain, treatment from a certified Speech-Language Pathologist will help you improve speech, language, communication and/or swallowing skills that were affected by stroke. The long term goals will focus on improving your quality of life over time. To get the maximum benefit from SLP treatment, follow these action steps:

- Attend your appointments consistently
- Once your evaluation is completed, you and your family should discuss your specific goals for speech, language, communication and/or swallowing with your Speech-Language Pathologist.
- Ask questions as they arise during your treatment program.
- Practice the exercises your Speech Pathologist suggests.
- Contact your insurance company to find out specific benefits of your plan.

Reference: NINDS. Post-Stroke Rehabilitation. 2014. NIH Publication No. 14 1846 Access at:

<https://stroke.nih.gov/materials/rehabilitation.htm>

Disclaimer: This document contains information and/or instructional materials developed by the University of Michigan Health System (UMHS) for the typical patient with your condition. It may include links to online content that was not created by UMHS and for which UMHS does not assume responsibility. It does not replace medical advice from your health care provider because your experience may differ from that of the typical patient. Talk to your health care provider if you have any questions about this document, your condition or your treatment plan.

Authors: Karen Kurcz, MA, CCC, Karen Kluin, MS, CCC, BC-ANCDS, and Elaine Ledwon-Robinson, MS, CCC, BC-NCD. Reviewer: Anne McLeod RN DNPc

Patient Education by [University of Michigan Health System](#) is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 3.0 Unported License](#). Last Revised 07/2016