

### What is speech and language therapy?

Speech and language therapy helps you and your family reduce and cope with communication problems caused by a stroke. Speech-language pathologists (SLPs) can guide you through relearning the mental and physical aspects of producing speech and having conversations. For stroke survivors who are unable to regain their speaking abilities completely, therapy can help you to work around your remaining difficulties by teaching you other ways to make yourself understood and help you identify and use assistive communication technology.

### What stroke problems can speech and language therapy help with?

Stroke can affect your thought patterns, memory, and the ability to speak and understand the speech of others. The most common communication problems after a stroke are *aphasia*, *dysarthria*, and *dysphagia*.

- **Aphasia:** problems with the mental processing of language; aphasia is one of the most common problems after a stroke, occurring in as many as 40% of survivors.<sup>1</sup> Survivors may have trouble converting their thoughts into words, finding the right words for things, or constructing sentences properly. This can prompt you to speak very slowly, use the wrong words without realizing it, or produce speech that doesn't make sense. It can also affect your ability to read, write, or deal with numbers.
- **Dysarthria:** problems speaking properly because of weakness or inability to control the muscles of the face and mouth.
- **Dysphagia:** difficulty swallowing; caused by damage to a specific part of the brain.

Speech and language therapy can help you recover as much of your language ability as possible, as well as help you resolve swallowing difficulties. It can also teach you and your family and caregivers how to compensate for any problems that remain, including changing your environment and finding new ways to make yourself understood.

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