

Speech and Language Spotlight on: Adults



COMMUNICATION
ACROSS THE LIFESPAN

Better Hearing & Speech Month

A variety of medical conditions or injuries can lead to speech and language disorders in adults. For someone who has never had such troubles, losing the ability to communicate effectively can be disorienting, frustrating, and upsetting. Speech and language treatment can help!

Communication is Life: Many people may not appreciate their ability to communicate until it is lost. From having one's basic needs met to nurturing relationships and earning a living, communication is at the core.

Causes: Speech and language problems in adults can result from a variety of causes, including brain injury; stroke; diseases that affect the brain, such as Alzheimer's disease, multiple sclerosis, or Parkinson's disease; breathing problems; cancers occurring in the head and/or neck region; and voice damage.

Types of Speech and Language Disorders in Adults: Problems that may be acquired in adulthood include the following:

- **Aphasia.** This involves problems speaking, understanding, reading, writing, telling time, and/or using numbers. Often misunderstood, aphasia does not affect a person's intelligence. The most common cause of aphasia is stroke.
- **Cognitive-communication disorders.** Problems with thinking and communication can affect each other. Some examples are difficulty paying attention, remembering, organizing thoughts, and solving problems.
- **Apraxia of speech.** Speech difficulties arise from problems planning motor movements. It is caused by damage to the parts of the brain that are involved in speaking.
- **Dysarthria.** Speech difficulties (e.g., slurred speech) due to weakness of muscles involved in breathing and/or speaking.
- **Voice Disorders.** Changes in pitch, loudness, and vocal quality that negatively impact communication. These may result from nodules on the vocal cord, overuse/misuse of voice (e.g., yelling), diseases such as Parkinson's or multiple sclerosis, and other causes.

Adults also can continue to experience speech and language disorders that began in childhood. Although treatment ideally begins early in life, people can successfully be treated for these disorders at any age.

Treatment Makes a Difference: Speech-language pathologists treat communication disorders in hospital, outpatient, and home settings, typically resulting in significant improvement in the person's quality of life.



Speech-language pathologists can help!

Learn more at www.asha.org/public.



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