

Handy Handouts®

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Dysarthria

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Speech production involves the muscles of the face, lips, tongue, and throat. In order to produce speech loud enough for a listener to hear, the muscles involved in breathing are also used. Dysarthria is a motor-speech disorder caused by weakness in or lack of control of one or more of the muscle groups necessary for speech. Dysarthria is most often a result of damage to the brain or conditions known to cause paralysis affecting the muscles of the face, tongue, or throat. Medications can also cause dysarthria.



Underlying Causes of Dysarthria



- Stroke, brain injury, tumors
- Parkinson's disease
- Amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS)
- Huntington's Disease
- Multiple sclerosis (MS)
- Cerebral palsy
- Muscular dystrophy
- Guillain-Barre syndrome
- Lyme disease
- Myasthenia gravis
- Wilson's disease
- Prescription narcotics or sedatives

Symptoms of Dysarthria



- Slow or slurred speech
- Rapid, unintelligible speech
- Weak intonation, monotone voice
- Poor volume control; speak in a whisper or too loudly
- Raspy, nasal, or strained voice quality
- Weakness in tongue, jaw, or facial muscles

See your doctor right away if you have sudden and unexplained changes in speech. The symptoms present can help determine the type of motor-speech disorder. After diagnosis, a Speech-Language Pathologist (SLP) will be able to determine whether dysarthria is present and determine the best course of treatment. The doctor will treat the cause of dysarthria when possible in order to improve speech. Then, an SLP will target increasing muscle strength and breath support and improving articulation during therapy depending on the symptoms present. They will also educate family members and provide strategies to improve overall communication. If speech and language therapy is not effective, an SLP may implement an augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) system.

Resources:

American Speech-Language-Hearing Association. n.d. "Dysarthria." Disorders and Diseases. Retrieved April 23, 2018 from: <https://www.asha.org/public/speech/disorders/dysarthria/#about>

Duffy, Joseph R. 2005. Motor Speech Disorders: Substrates, Differential Diagnosis, and Management. St. Louis, MO: Elsevier Mosby.

Mayo Clinic. n.d. "Dysarthria." Diseases & Conditions. Retrieved April 23, 2018 from: <https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/dysarthria/symptoms-causes/syc-20371994>

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