

Apraxia of speech

Apraxia of speech (also known as dyspraxia) is a motor speech disorder. You know what you want to say, but your brain has trouble telling your speech muscles how to move. The muscles aren't weak.

You may have difficulty starting a word – your muscles may need to search for the right place before you can say a word correctly. Your speech may sound distorted and slow.

Each time you say a word it may sound different – this can be frustrating. Long words and sentences may be harder. Everyday sayings may be easier than answering questions or describing something.



Causes of apraxia of speech

Apraxia of speech is caused by damage to the areas of the brain that coordinate the muscles involved in speech. This includes the muscles of the lungs, voice box, lips, and tongue.

You may have had a stroke (the most common cause) or a head injury (for example, in a car accident).

Types of apraxia of speech

Apraxia of speech is variable.

- You may not be able to speak at all.
- You may only have occasional problems with a word.
- You may also have aphasia (a language disorder). The severity of your aphasia and apraxia of speech may differ.

Getting better from apraxia of speech

A lot can change over the first few days, weeks, and months. Some people recover very quickly. For others, it is a long, slow process.

You may never communicate as well as you did before. But some people still see signs of progress years later.



Getting help with apraxia of speech

A speech–language therapist can work with you and your whānau/family to help improve your speech and develop new ways to communicate effectively.

There are things you can do yourself to help.

Try to relax and take your time. Keep your answers short and simple. If you get stuck on a word, try:

- saying it in a different way
- breaking up longer words into syllables to make it easier to say them
- saying just the key words if you can't get the full sentence out clearly
- writing it down
- gesturing
- pointing to what you want
- using your communication book or device.

People you communicate with can also help by:

- giving you time to get your message out
- being patient when you are frustrated, and asking you to stop and rest
- asking you questions that need a "yes" or "no" response
- encouraging you to gesture or write things down
- encouraging you to use your communication device
- reducing distractions
- helping you practise your speech exercises
- letting you know if they do not understand you.

You might also find useful information on Healthinfo by searching for “dysarthria”.

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