

# Apraxia of speech

## Mate whakahauā ā-reo

Apraxia of speech (also known as verbal 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 are not weak.

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



frustrating. Long words and sentences may be harder. Everyday sayings may be easier than answering questions or describing something.

The level of difficulty varies between people. Some people may not be able to speak at all. Other may only have occasional problems with a word.

You may have both aphasia (a language disorder) and apraxia of speech. One of these disorders may be worse than the other.

## 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).

## 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
- just saying the key words if you cannot 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 in the page about *Dysarthria* (go to [www.healthinfo.org.nz](http://www.healthinfo.org.nz) and search for “dysarthria”).

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