



# Speech pathology and older people



There will be lots more older people in Australia each year.



Speech Pathologists work with older people who have

- communication problems
- swallowing problems.



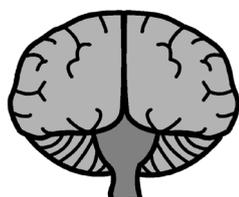
Communication problems include

- talking
- understanding
- reading
- writing.



Swallowing problems include

- coughing
- a wet or gurgly voice
- taking more time to eat or drink
- it is hard to chew or swallow
- lots of chest infections
- weight loss.



**Why do older people have communication problems?**

Brain disorders can cause communication problems. For example,

- stroke
- Parkinson's disease
- dementia.



Older people can also have voice problems.

Voice problems can cause

- people to stay away from other people
- anxiety
- depression
- other mental health problems.



## **Communication problems with dementia.**

This includes

- problems finding words
- forgetting what you were saying
- forgetting recently heard information
- saying the same thing over again and
- asking the same question over again.



Communication problems can make a person and their family sad.



## **What do communication problems mean for older people?**

Problems

- keeping friends
- saying what you want and need
- having a conversation
- joining in the community.



## What do swallowing problems mean for older people?

People may **not** eat well and get sick.



If people get very sick from swallowing problems they can die.

It can make people

- cross
- sad
- worried.

It can make it hard to spend time with family and in the community.



## Tips for communicating with older people

### What to set up

- Understand what the person is good at and what they find hard
- Go to a quiet and comfortable place
- Turn off noise. For example, TV, radio or computer. If you can **not** turn things off, sit away from the TV, computer or people
- Check the person has their hearing aids or glasses. Check their hearing aids are working
- Sit down with the person.



### When you talk with the person

- Take more time to communicate
- Make sure there is good light
- Speak simply and clearly
- Talk about 1 thing at a time
- Say important things more than 1 time and write things down
- Give easy instructions. Use pictures and gestures
- Give the person time to ask questions
- Look for cues. For example, actions, facial expressions.



### More tips

- Talk to the person about their communication problems
- It may be ok to touch the person to get their attention
- Talk about choices. For example, care and activities
- Talk about the person's life history, interests and things they know
- Find lots of time to chat
- Make signs, brochures and forms easy to read. For example, big print, pictures, simple words.



### Where can you get help?

Contact a speech pathologist in your local area.

Speech pathologists can

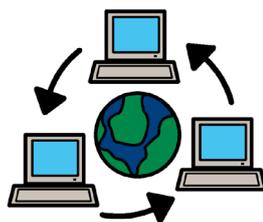
- do an assessment
- give advice
- give therapy
- find the right tools for you.

## Find a local speech pathologist

Speech Pathology Australia

Website [www.speechpathologyaustralia.org.au](http://www.speechpathologyaustralia.org.au)

Click on - Find a Speech Pathologist.



## How do you become a speech pathologist?

You need to do a course at University.

To find out more contact

Speech Pathology Australia

Phone 1300 368 835

Website [www.speechpathologyaustralia.org.au](http://www.speechpathologyaustralia.org.au)

Click on - Information for the community.

Scope's Communication Resource Centre wrote the Easy English.  
September 2013 [www.scopevic.org.au](http://www.scopevic.org.au)

To see the original, contact Speech Pathology Australia  
[www.speechpathologyaustralia.org.au](http://www.speechpathologyaustralia.org.au)

Mayer-Johnson LLC says we can use the Picture Communication  
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