

Treating Dysarthria



Dysarthria is a speech disorder caused by muscle weakness in the face, lips, tongue, throat, and breathing muscles. It happens when the part of the brain that controls speech production is damaged, and the muscles needed to make certain sounds can't be used fully. There may be problems with the speech and tone. This is due to changes in the accuracy of muscle movements that affect speech. A speech therapist (an expert trained in speech rehabilitation) will find out how dysarthria is affecting your speech. Then they will advise specific rehab that can focus on improving those speech problems.



Assessing your speech function

Before rehab starts, the therapist will ask you to try a few simple tests. These are to assess your speech problems and plan treatment. During these tests, the therapist evaluates muscle strength, accuracy, and motion on both sides of your face.

You may be asked to repeat words and syllables quickly in a pattern, prolong vowels such as "ah" for a length of time, and read some text. As you speak, the therapist listens for lost vowel sounds, breathing patterns, and slowed or slurred speech.

Regaining voice control

Clearer, smoother speech is a common rehab goal. Speech therapists work to help you regain speech that is clearer and easier for others to understand. You may be taught to control and strengthen muscles in your face and mouth. You may be told to:

- Pronounce sounds in words more clearly and smoothly.
- Improve your enunciation by focusing on saying single words correctly instead of trying to speak a whole sentence at once.
- Use strategies to slow down your rate of speech.
- Control your breathing during speech.
- Strengthen and improve your range of movement with the muscles of your face, mouth, and respiratory system.

Tips for communication

Like any skill, speech gets better with practice. Try these tips:

- Practice strategies or activities provided by the speech therapist.
- Speak slowly and pause often. This gives you time to make all the sounds that form each word.
- You may be asked to repeat some words.
- Try not to let others speak for you. Have other means of communication available, such as pen and paper.
- Reduce background noise.

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