

Dysarthria: Improving Speech

Dysarthria is a speech problem caused by a lack of control over the muscles in the face and mouth. Clearer, smoother speech is the goal of rehabilitation. A speech therapist (an expert trained in speech rehabilitation) will work to help you regain vocal control.

How to say it

dihs-AR-three-uh

Speech therapy

The main goal in therapy is to make your loved one more understandable. Your loved one may be taught to control and strengthen muscles in the face and mouth to improve speech. Such exercises are often done in front of a mirror. Your loved one may also be taught new ways of breaking up words or making sounds. For instance, they may do activities that help them:

- Improve pronunciation of sounds through speech exercise.
- Focus on one word at a time rather than on entire sentences.
- Control and slow down the rate of speech during a conversation.
- Control breathing during speech.
- Improve and increase the range of movement with muscles in the mouth, tongue, and respiratory systems.

You can help



Practice saying words with your loved one.

Speech, like any skill, gets better with practice. Talk to the person as you normally would. Say what you need to say, then wait for an answer. Try these tips:

- Practice saying sounds and words with your loved one. The speech therapist may provide word lists.
- Remind the person to speak slowly. This gives them time to make all the sounds that form each word.
- Ask your loved one to repeat words you can't understand. Or ask them to try saying it another way.
- Try not to speak for the person unless it is necessary.
- Encourage efforts that the person makes to improve speech.
- Try reducing background noise.
- Have other ways to communicate available, such as pen and paper.