

# Speech & Language

Many of us take our ability to communicate for granted. Yet the ability to speak, hear and be heard is much more vital to our everyday lives than most of us realize. Each year, Speech-Language and Audiology Canada (SAC) dedicates the month of May to raising public awareness about communication disorders and the professionals who can help.

## Some causes of speech and language disorders:

- Traumatic brain injury
- Stroke
- Head and neck cancers
- Learning disabilities
- Degenerative diseases (e.g., ALS, Parkinson's, etc.)

## Types of speech and language disorders:

**Articulation disorders** occur when a person cannot correctly produce one or more sounds (e.g., wabbit for rabbit, kip for skip). May be the result of delayed development, poor muscle control, cleft lip/palate, hearing impairment or learning disabilities. In adults, may be the result of neurological damage from stroke or head injury.

**Voice disorders** include inappropriate pitch, loudness, quality or total loss of voice. Voice problems may result from damage to the vocal cords because of surgery, disease or yelling (vocal abuse), or from conditions such as cleft palate, cerebral palsy or hearing impairment.

**Fluency disorders** or stuttering is a disruption in the normal flow or rhythm of speech. Characteristics of stuttering may include repetitions of sounds, syllables, words or phrases.

**Apraxia (A-PRAX-SIA):** A speech programming disorder that makes words and sentences sound jumbled or meaningless.

**Dysarthria (DIS-AR-THREE-AH):** A group of speech disorders resulting from paralysis, weakness or lack of coordination of the muscles required for speech.

**Aphasia (AH-FAY-SIA):** A language disorder due to brain damage or disease resulting in difficulty in formulating, expressing, and/or understanding language.

[www.communicationhealth.ca](http://www.communicationhealth.ca)

May is Speech and Hearing Month  
[maymonth.ca](http://maymonth.ca)



Speech-Language &  
Audiology Canada  
Communicating care

**1 in 6 people**  
has a speech, language  
or hearing disorder.

## TIPS for better communication:

- Speaking with someone who has a communication disorder may require extra time and patience.
- Reduce background noises that may be distracting (e.g., turn off the radio or TV, close the door or move to a quieter place).
- Stick to one conversation topic at a time. Avoid quick shifts in conversation topics.
- Keep sentences and questions short.
- Allow extra time for responding.
- Ask questions with yes/no answers. Open-ended questions are more difficult to respond to.
- Be an active listener. Pay attention to eye gaze and gestures. Take a guess (e.g., "Are you talking about your dog? Yes? Tell me more.")
- Speak slowly and clearly.
- Do not speak louder to get your message across unless the person has a hearing loss

**SPEECH-LANGUAGE PATHOLOGISTS** are highly-trained professionals who are focused on the prevention, identification and management of speech, language and swallowing disorders.