

Speech Therapy:

Contact an SLP (Speech-Language Pathologist) for an assessment or consultation. The SLP will evaluate the nature and severity of a person's apraxia of speech.

Treatment, if recommended, may include:

- Exercises designed to improve speech/articulation
- Practise using techniques that make speech easier to produce, such as dividing up long words or phrases
- Caregiver or family training and/or counseling
- If needed, alternative means of communication can be introduced to supplement speech (e.g. gestures, word or picture boards, computerized devices)

Any speech, swallowing, language, or cognitive concerns that may co-exist with acquired apraxia of speech can also be addressed by the SLP.

For More Information:

Contact your local hospital or health unit to learn about Speech Pathology services in your area.

The following websites contain information about apraxia of speech and other communication impairments:

- Canadian Association of Speech-Language Pathologists & Audiologists: www.caslpa.ca
- American Speech-Language-Hearing Association: www.asha.org

For information about Speech-Language Pathology in British Columbia or to find a private therapist, visit www.bcaslpa.bc.ca

**FH SLP Professional
Practice Council**

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Acquired Apraxia of Speech



Information about Uncoordinated Speech

Speech-Language Pathology



Apraxia of Speech

What is Apraxia?

Apraxia of Speech is a motor speech disorder that causes **difficulty with initiating and sequencing the sounds in words**. It is caused by impairment of the brain's ability to control the muscles used in speech. The muscles themselves are not weak, but voluntary control is affected. Apraxia of speech is caused by damage to the brain, commonly:

- stroke
- head injury
- brain tumour

Apraxia of speech is only one type of apraxia. It is frequently seen along with **oral apraxia**, or difficulty with voluntary movements of the mouth (rather than 'automatic' movements such as yawning or sneezing). There are also apraxias that affect the ability to perform complex tasks with the body, such as dressing or washing. These different types of apraxia can co-exist, or a person may only have one type. Apraxia of speech can occur along with other speech-language difficulties, such as aphasia (loss of language) or dysarthria (slurred speech).

What You Might Notice:

- Faltering speech
- Trouble starting to talk
- Slow rate of speech
- Multiple attempts at a word
- Inconsistent errors; what they say once they can't say again, or they say it differently the next time
- Better with everyday phrases or when they're not trying, words just "pop out" clearly
- Greater difficulty with long or complex words and phrases
- Unable to make sounds or words at all (if severe)

The person may experience:

- Groping movements in the mouth when trying to speak
- Difficulty making other movements of their tongue, lips, or jaw
- Frustration since they know what they want to say but are unable to say it

Apraxia of speech can be mild and not significantly disrupt a person's communication or it can have a devastating impact on a person's ability to say what they want to say.

What You Can Do:

Tips for the **listener**:

- Give the person plenty of time to communicate; be patient.
- Establish the topic so you both know what you are talking about.
- Ask yes/no questions to clarify or give choices if appropriate.
- If you don't understand, repeat exactly what you understood and focus on the parts that were unclear.
- Don't pretend to understand; try a different approach or agree to come back to the topic later.

Tips for the **person with apraxia of speech**:

- Speak slowly.
- Write it down if you can.
- Break down long words or phrases into shorter chunks.
- Use facial expression, gesture, drawing, or pointing to help clarify your message.
- Try rephrasing what you said.
- Remain calm, it's okay to give up and come back to it later.
- Avoid important conversations when you are tired or emotional.