

Swallowing problems

Dysphagia means problems swallowing due to weak muscles or poor coordination.

Dysphagia can look like:

- **coughing** or **clearing throat** while eating or drinking
- getting **food stuck in throat**
- **chewing problems**
- having **food stuck in mouth** after swallowing

We might check your swallow by watching you eat and drink, or taking an x-ray while you eat and drink.

What you can do:

- ✓ **Brush your teeth** twice a day to get remove bacteria.
- ✓ **Sit upright** when eating or drinking.
- ✓ **Focus** on eating or drinking. Avoid distractions.

We might also suggest:

- ✓ **changes** to your food or drink
- ✓ **exercises** to make your swallowing muscles stronger
- ✓ **strategies** for eating

If you have questions, please ask your health care provider.

To find more information go to:

The Heart and Stroke
Foundation of Canada
Heartandstroke.ca

After Stroke BC
strokerecoverybc.ca

The Aphasia Institute
Aphasia.ca

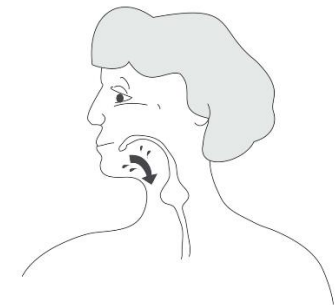
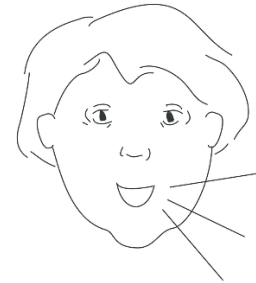
www.fraserhealth.ca

This information does not replace the advice given to you by your healthcare provider.

Catalogue #265823 (January 2024)
For more copies: patienteduc.fraserhealth.ca

Communicating and Swallowing Changes

After a Stroke



Some people have changes in their **swallowing** and **communication** after a stroke.

Your **speech-language pathologist (SLP)** can check for changes. They will explain the changes and give you treatment.

Communication problems

There are four main types of communication problems after a stroke.

Dysarthria

Makes it hard to speak due to changes in muscle strength and coordination.

Cognitive-communication problems

Makes it hard to communicate due to changes in cognition (thinking).

- It can be hard to stay on topic or plan how you want to say something.
- You might feel less talkative.
- It might be harder to use facial expressions or be polite.

Apraxia of speech

Makes it hard to form and put together the sounds in words.

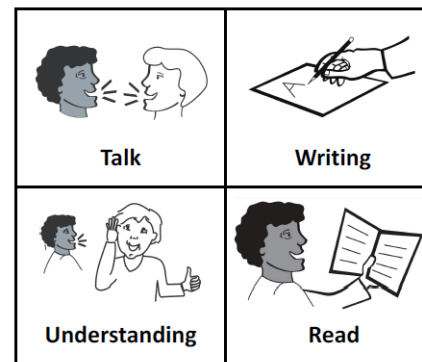
- You might know what you want to say but the sounds come out wrong.
- It can help to watch someone make the sounds and imitate them.

Aphasia

Makes it hard to:

- **say** the right words
- **understand** what people say
- **read** words or sentences
- **write** letters and spell words

With aphasia, your thinking is good and you know what you want to say.



Help from others

Other people can help you communicate by using the tips on the right. You might want to show them this pamphlet.

To help someone with aphasia **understand** what you are saying:

- ✓ use **short, simple** sentences
- ✓ use your **hands, head, and face** to express yourself
- ✓ **point** to pictures and objects
- ✓ **draw**, and **write** key words

To help someone with aphasia **tell you** something:

- ✓ ask them questions that can be answered with **yes or no**
- ✓ give them 2 or 3 **choices**
- ✓ **wait** while they think
- ✓ do not answer for them, but **ask if they want help**
- ✓ **summarize** what the person said to be sure that you understood what they wanted to say

If you cannot understand each other, try a different approach, or try again later.

If they get frustrated, be encouraging. You could say, “I know you know what you want to say.”