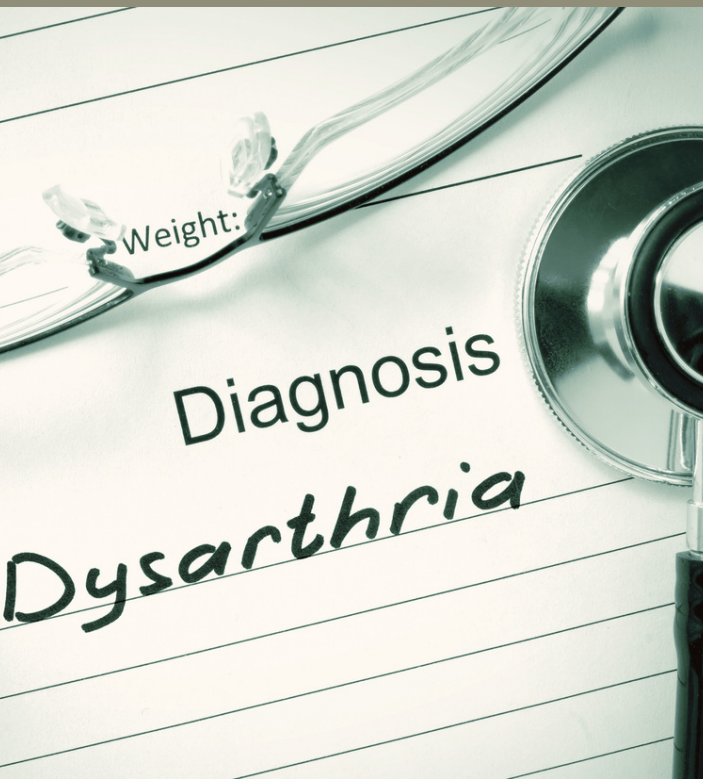


What is Dysarthria?

Dysarthria is a disorder caused by the weakening or reduced control of the muscles that are used for speech. This occurs when parts of the brain that control these muscles are damaged. Dysarthria can present as slurred or slowed speech that can be difficult to understand. It is possible to improve one's ability to speak and communicate clearly by engaging with a Speech Therapist.

This condition may also cause atypical speech rhythm and voice changes, depending on the type of dysarthria. The condition itself is not a medical emergency, however sudden dysarthria can be caused by a stroke or brain trauma and these require urgent medical attention.



dysarthria

This pamphlet contains a brief summary of what dysarthria is, treatment options, and other additional information. Feel free to contact us regarding any questions you may have.

Contact Us



18 Eton Rd
Johannesburg, 2193
South Africa



083 656 8979



karyn@brainworxtherapy.com

<https://www.brainworx.info>



Dysarthria Checklist

If you are experiencing the following symptoms, please consult a doctor as soon as possible.

- slurred speech
- slow or rapid speech
- irregular speech pattern
- excessively quiet or loud speaking
- difficulties controlling tongue or lips
- harsh or breathy voice
- additional nasal resonance (excess noise coming out of the nose)
- monotonous loudness or volume
- having trouble swallowing (dysphagia)
- choppy speaking that uses only brief phrases
- any change from your usual speaking pattern

Common Causes

Dysarthria can develop if the brain and nervous system, which controls the muscles used for speech, are damaged in some way.

Dysarthria can either be:

Developmental

This occurs as a result of brain damage before or during birth, such as cerebral palsy

Acquired

This occurs as the result of changes in the brain later in life, such as damage caused by a stroke, or brain trauma. It can also be caused by a progressive condition such as Parkinson's disease or motor neurone disease.



Signs and Symptoms

- slurred, nasal sounding or breathy speech
- a strained and hoarse voice
- very loud or quiet speech
- problems speaking in a regular rhythm, with frequent hesitations
- gurgly or monotone speech
- difficulty with tongue and lip movements
- difficulty swallowing (dysphagia), which may lead to constant drooling, making speaking more difficult



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Treatment and Management

Treatment for dysarthria is typically simply a small component of a larger management strategy. That's because some underlying ailment is typically to blame.

Speech and language therapy is used to address dysarthria. Your capacity to converse and communicate can be improved.

A speech-language pathologist or therapist offers this kind of therapy. Therapy may involve:

- exercises to strengthen and improve the function of the afflicted muscles
- techniques for speaking slowly
- techniques for using artificial voice software
- techniques for correctly over-articulating words
- exercises to practice regulating speaking volume



Tips for Family, Friends, and Carers

- Reduce distractions and background noises when having a conversation
- Look at the person when they speak
- After speaking, allow the person plenty of time to respond to reduce anxiety
- Be careful about finishing their sentences or correcting any errors in their language - this may cause frustration or resentment
- Do not pretend to understand what they are saying if you're having difficulty comprehending their sentences - be honest
- If necessary, seek clarification by asking yes or no questions or paraphrasing



When to Contact a Doctor

Make an appointment with a speech-language therapist or pathologist if you detect any changes in your speech.

A primary care physician or a speech-language pathologist should be contacted if you have:

- Slurred speech
- Difficulty moving your tongue, lips, or jaw
- Difficulty raising your voice
- Unexplained changes in your voice
- Difficulty swallowing
- Difficulty pronouncing sounds

Types of Dysarthria

The type of dysarthria depends on the part of the brain affected. These types include:

Flaccid Dysarthria

Caused by lower motor neuron damage. This involves the cranial and spinal nerves.

Spastic Dysarthria

The upper motor neurons on one or both sides of the brain are damaged. This involves areas that control movement.

Unilateral upper motor neuron dysarthria

This milder form of spastic dysarthria is one of the most common types of the condition. It is often caused by stroke.

Ataxic Dysarthria

Caused by damage to the connections between the cerebellum and other parts of the brain

Hypokinetic Dysarthria

Caused by an issue with the basal ganglia control circuit, a type of pathway in the brain that controls motor function. This type is often associated with Parkinson's disease, which causes slow movement and rigidity.

Hyperkinetic Dysarthria

Caused by damage to the basal ganglia control circuit, however it is more commonly seen in conditions like Huntington's disease and Tourette syndrome. This type normally causes unpredictable speech production.

Mixed Dysarthria

Occurs when there are two or more types of dysarthria present



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How Do We Diagnose Dysarthria?

Dysarthria requires several tests. A healthcare professional may use several methods including:

- Examining your medical history
- Physical examination
- Imaging tests (such as an MRI)
- Genetic tests
- Speech tests



Common Causes Continued

Dysarthria is caused by brain damage. This can occur at birth, like in cerebral palsy. In other cases, brain damage may be due to injury or illness. Examples include:

- stroke
- traumatic brain injury
- brain tumours
- acoustic neuroma
- encephalitis
- meningitis
- amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS)
- Parkinson's disease
- Huntington's disease
- dystonia
- Tourette syndrome
- muscular dystrophy
- Bell's palsy
- myasthenia gravis
- tongue injury
- medications that affect your central nervous system

Are you at risk?

Children and adults alike can develop dysarthria. However, you may be more likely to develop the condition if you;

- have a high risk of stroke
- have a degenerative brain disease
- have a neuromuscular disease

Drinking excessive amounts of alcohol and using illegal substances can also cause temporary dysarthria while intoxicated.