

# Clear Speech Strategies

4	15 Audiologist 3:40pm		24
21	22 Physiotherapy 10am	23 Doctor's appointment 2:10pm	
28	29	30	1

## Description

Strategies are used by a person and their communication partners so that the person's speech is easier to understand (e.g., more intelligible)

## Who May Benefit?

Adults and children whose speech is hard to understand due to slurred or distorted speech, weak voice, rapid or slow speech rate and/or abnormal resonance (e.g., nasality). Speech intelligibility may be affected by neurological conditions including stroke, ALS, MS, Parkinson's, brain injury or Cerebral Palsy.

## Tips

Communication partners can:

- Face the person and watch their lips to notice nonverbal cues such as their facial expressions, gestures and body language.
- Reduce background noise, including music and fans so you can hear the person's voice better
- Be honest, gently tell them when you don't understand their message rather than pretending to understand and not responding appropriately to their message or request.
- Repeat back the words you did understand or paraphrase to clarify their message
- Be patient, waiting for the person to speak and to clarify their message

The person may be able to compensate for the difficulties:

- If they have limited respiratory capacity they can try taking a breath between words or to shortening their message by only saying short phrases or the key words.
- If they are producing excessive saliva they can try swallowing or clearing their throat before speaking
- If they are speaking quickly they can try slowing down their rate by exaggerating each sound, pronouncing each word or breaking multisyllabic words into syllables. Performing a half second to one second pause is another way to change rate.

Additional information can be obtained to understand the message if their speech is supplemented.

- Offer them a pencil and paper or device to write, draw or type their message.
- Ask yes/no questions or a topic communication board to clarify what is being discussed.
- Encourage them to show you what they are talking about with gestures, a communication board or device.
- The person can point to the first letter of each word on an alphabet board as they speak so they slow down the rate of their speech. This will provide you with cues to narrow down the options for what they are saying and to distinguish word boundaries.
- Encourage the client to use a voice amplifier if they have a weak voice and/or they tire quickly when speaking.

