

Communication

There is nothing more important than being able to communicate with those around you.

Many people with physical disabilities have trouble speaking. This is due to problems with the muscles used for speaking. A person with complex communication needs (CCN) is often not able to communicate through speech or writing. Many learn to communicate in other ways, including gestures, facial expressions, limited speech and the use of low or high-tech devices. Many have profiles or dictionaries containing information about how they communicate.

Difficulties communicating as you get older

Many people with physical disabilities start to notice communication becomes more difficult as they get older. Some of the problems include:

- Increased word finding difficulties
- Muffled or slurred speech
- Difficulty answering questions
- Relying on somebody to interpret a message for you
- Being asked multiple times to repeat your message
- Difficulty projecting your voice

- Getting easily confused with new information
- Getting confused when telling a story
- Difficulty accessing your device
- Forgetting where words are located on your device
- Using your communication system (device or tool) less than in recent week, months or years

These problems can be a sign of a decline in your memory, cognition and understanding, or the strength and coordination of the muscles used for speaking.

What can I do to improve and maintain my communication?

See a speech pathologist for a review of your communication needs. They may help you by:

- Finding ways for you to communicate with those around you
- Finding ways to remember what is happening around you
- Finding ways to improve your strength and coordination of your muscles that help you speak



- Recommending low or high tech Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) tools and methods and support you and those who support you to learn how to use them

Create a Communication Profile or Dictionary to help those around you to communicate with you in a meaningful and respectful way. A speech pathologist together with your family and support network are the best people to help you create your profile.

See an occupational therapist to help you to access any devices you use.

Visit futurethinking.abilitycentre.com.au for more information.