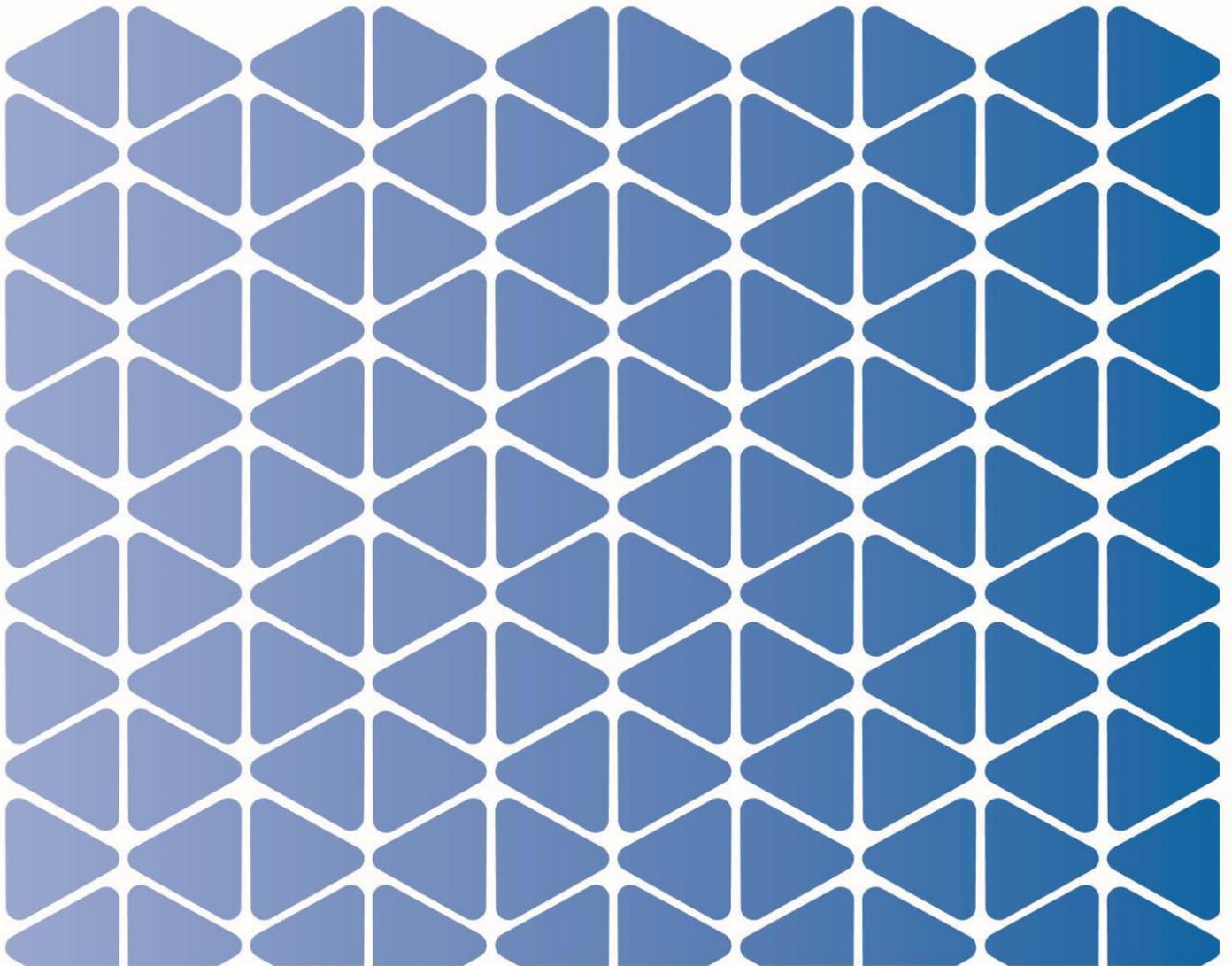




## PATIENT INFORMATION

# DYSARTHRIA

**Information for patients, their relatives  
and carers**



## **What to expect, how to help and who to contact**

Dysarthria is a neuromuscular problem affecting the muscles involved with speaking, including the breathing mechanism for speech. There are a number of things that can cause dysarthria e.g. brain injury, neurological disease (Parkinson's, MS and MND), stroke, brain tumour, infections, and facial paralysis. The result is often slurred speech due to a weakness of muscles in the tongue and lips. Because of this, speech can be difficult to understand, especially by strangers.

In addition, they may find their voice has become quieter or louder, hoarse, breathy, slow and effortful or sounds a bit monotonous.

Other related factors:

1. If tense, tired, upset or hurried, there will be more difficulty in speaking clearly.
2. There may be difficulty with swallowing and eating and / or controlling saliva.

A speech and language therapist will assess a person's speech difficulties. They will assess the movement of the face, tongue and lips and assess their articulation of speech sounds and words. They will provide exercises and strategies to help improve speech clarity. If dysarthria is severe the speech and language therapist can advise on the use of alternative and augmentative (AAC) communication systems.

## **Helping someone with dysarthria**

- Check they have their glasses / hearing-aid and dentures. If dentures are worn, they may not fit as well due to altered muscle tone.
- Help to encourage good posture. A poor posture inhibits breathing which is necessary for good speech. Ensure there is adequate support for the back, neck and head, promoting an upright position.
- Encourage them to speak slowly with frequent pauses.
- Encourage them to exaggerate their lip and tongue movements when speaking, to achieve maximum clarity.
- Keep paper and pencil nearby as writing the word may help.

## **Helping your communication**

- Make sure people are watching you when you are speaking
- Slow down your rate of speech and take frequent pauses
- Speak more slowly and deliberately using a deeper breathing pattern.
- Exaggerate your lip and tongue movements for speech.
- Break words and phrases into syllables like this - e.g. in-the-af-ter-noon.
- Ask people not to interrupt and to wait until you have finished.
- Check that people have understood what you have said.
- Keep paper and pencil nearby for writing.

**Where can I find more information?**

National voluntary organisation of members concerned with augmentative and alternative communications (communication aids). Their website address is: **www.communicationmatters.org.uk**

The Stroke Association is the UK's Stroke charity. They support stroke survivor, families and carers. They also fund research into the prevention and treatment of stroke. Their website address is: **www.stroke.org.uk**

The RCSLT is the professional body for speech and language therapists in the UK; providing leadership and setting professional standards. Their website address is: **www.rcslt.co.uk**

The NHS has a wealth of information on their website: **www.nhs.uk**  
You can also ask your GP or local speech and language therapy service for more information on dysarthria and support.

**REMEMBER** – Each person will have individual and specific speech difficulties depending on the extent and the location of the damage in the brain. Some people may have additional language problems that can affect their ability to understand or to express their needs and wants.

Your speech and language therapies is: .....

Contact number: .....

If you have any questions please contact the Speech Therapy Department on 01905 760475 or write to us at Worcester Royal Hospital, Charles Hastings Way, Worcester WR5 1DD.

**If your symptoms or condition worsens, or if you are concerned about anything, please call your GP, 111, or 999.**

## **Patient Experience**

We know that being admitted to hospital can be a difficult and unsettling time for you and your loved ones. If you have any questions or concerns, please do speak with a member of staff on the ward or in the relevant department who will do their best to answer your questions and reassure you.

## **Feedback**

Feedback is really important and useful to us – it can tell us where we are working well and where improvements can be made. There are lots of ways you can share your experience with us including completing our Friends and Family Test – cards are available and can be posted on all wards, departments and clinics at our hospitals. We value your comments and feedback and thank you for taking the time to share this with us.

## **Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)**

If you have any concerns or questions about your care, we advise you to talk with the nurse in charge or the department manager in the first instance as they are best placed to answer any questions or resolve concerns quickly. If the relevant member of staff is unable to help resolve your concern, you can contact the PALS Team. We offer informal help, advice or support about any aspect of hospital services & experiences.

Our PALS team will liaise with the various departments in our hospitals on your behalf, if you feel unable to do so, to resolve your problems and where appropriate refer to outside help.

If you are still unhappy you can contact the Complaints Department, who can investigate your concerns. You can make a complaint orally, electronically or in writing and we can advise and guide you through the complaints procedure.

## **How to contact PALS:**

**Telephone Patient Services: 0300 123 1732 or via email at: [wah-tr.PET@nhs.net](mailto:wah-tr.PET@nhs.net)**

## **Opening times:**

The PALS telephone lines are open Monday to Thursday from 8.30am to 4.30pm and Friday: 8.30am to 4.00pm. Please be aware that a voicemail service is in use at busy times, but messages will be returned as quickly as possible.

If you are unable to understand this leaflet, please communicate with a member of staff.