

Speech pathologists

Speech pathologists are specialists who work with people of all ages who have communication or swallowing difficulties. They often work in a multidisciplinary team of professionals to help people with a range of difficulties. These may include problems with speech, voice, using and understanding language, fluency, reading, writing, eating and drinking (dysphagia).

Children and adults with communication difficulties may suffer mental health issues and behavioural problems, show poor self-esteem and may struggle to manage social relationships and sustain employment.

Speech pathologists work with the individual, their family and carers, and other professionals to explore a wide variety of communication and swallowing therapies.

Help for communication and swallowing problems

Speech pathologists help people with a range of communication and swallowing difficulties. These include problems with:

- Speech
- Using and understanding language
- Voice
- Fluency (how well speech flows)
- Reading
- Writing
- Eating and drinking (dysphagia).

Many different people benefit from speech pathology

Those who can benefit from speech pathology include:

- Babies born with a cleft palate (speech pathologists give mothers advice about feeding)
- Pre-schoolers who are slow to talk
- Children who have difficulty with speech and written expression or with understanding what is said to them (receptive or expressive language disorder)
- Children with autism spectrum disorder
- Children with hearing loss
- People who stutter
- Professional voice users (teachers, singers)
- Accident victims with acquired brain injuries (ABI)
- People who have had a stroke
- People who have difficulty drinking and eating without choking
- People with an intellectual disability such as Down syndrome.

Where do speech pathologists work

Speech pathologists work in a number of settings, including:

- Kindergartens, primary and secondary schools
- Aged care facilities
- Hospitals
- Universities
- Rehabilitation services

- Mental health services
- Community health centres
- Private clinics
- Home-based therapy
- Specialist services for those with complex communication needs due to disorders such as autism, cerebral palsy and intellectual disability.
- You do not need a referral to see a speech pathologist

Types of services

The types of services that speech pathologists offer include:

- Individual treatment
- Small group sessions
- Workshops
- Home-based programs
- Classroom programs and teacher support
- Providing resources and advice to families and carers
- Consulting with community organisations
- Educating the community about communication and swallowing disorders, interventions available and better management of conditions.

Where to get help

- Speech Pathology Australia Tel. (03) 9642 4899

Things to remember

- Speech pathologists help people with communication and swallowing problems.
- Speech pathologists often work in a multidisciplinary team of professionals.
- Speech pathologists are different from speech and drama teachers.

This page has been produced in consultation with, and approved by:

Speech Pathology Australia

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