
Speech pathologists

Summary

- Speech pathologists help people with communication and swallowing problems.
 - Speech pathologists often work in a team with other health professionals to help people with a range of difficulties.
 - You do not need a referral to see a speech pathologist.
-

Speech pathologists are specialists who work with people of all ages who have communication or swallowing difficulties. They often work in a team with other health professionals to help people with a range of difficulties, such as problems with speech, voice, using and understanding language, fluency, reading, writing, eating and drinking.

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

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

Speech pathology for communication and swallowing problems

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

- speech
- stuttering (sometimes called dysfluency)
- using and understanding language
- voice
- reading and writing
- eating and drinking (difficulty swallowing is known as dysphagia).

Benefits of speech pathology

People who can benefit from speech pathology include:

- babies born with a cleft palate (speech pathologists can 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 (developmental language disorder)
 - children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD)
 - people with hearing loss
 - people who stutter
 - professional voice users (teachers, singers)
 - people with acquired brain injuries (ABIs)
 - people who have had a stroke
 - people who have difficulty drinking and eating without choking
 - people with an intellectual disability such as Down syndrome
 - people who need an augmentative or alternative communication (AAC) device to speak or communicate more easily.
-

Where 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
- people's homes
- specialist services for people 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 speech pathology 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, the types of interventions available and better management of conditions.

The Speech Pathology Australia '[Find a Speech Pathologist](#)' search function enables you to search for speech pathologists in your area, and you can narrow your search by selecting functions such as practice type, clinical population, services or area of special interest.

Where to get help

- Speech Pathology Australia [Find a Speech Pathologist service](#) or Tel. [1300 368 835](#) or [\(03\) 9642 4899](#)
- Community health centre
- Your child's school

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

Speech Pathology Australia

Content on this website is provided for information purposes only. Information about a therapy, service, product or treatment does not in any way endorse or support such therapy, service, product or treatment and is not intended to replace advice from your doctor or other registered health professional. The information and materials contained on this website are not intended to constitute a comprehensive guide concerning all aspects of the therapy, product or treatment described on the website. All users are urged to always seek advice from a registered health care professional for diagnosis and answers to their medical questions and to ascertain whether the particular therapy, service, product or treatment described on the website is suitable in their circumstances. The State of Victoria and the Department of Health & Human Services shall not bear any liability for reliance by any user on the materials contained on this website.

For the latest updates and more information, visit www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au

Copyright © 1999/2020 State of Victoria. Reproduced from the Better Health Channel (www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au) at no cost with permission of the Victorian Minister for Health. Unauthorised reproduction and other uses comprised in the copyright are prohibited without permission.