



Parkinson's Disease

Speech Concerns

Speech Changes in Parkinson's

Parkinson's Disease can affect the movement of muscles involved in breathing, voice production and speaking. You may find that your voice is weaker, lower in volume or fades out when you are talking. You may also notice that your voice sounds breathy, trembling or hoarse. Vocal tremors may also be observed. Your speech may become slurred or unclear, making it difficult for people to understand what you are saying. You may also notice changes to the rate and rhythm of your speech or your speech sounding monotone and lacking in expression.

Improving Your Speech

If you are having speech problems, it is useful to consult a Speech-Language Pathologist. A Speech-Language Pathologist will evaluate your speech, give you information and advice and may suggest a program of speech therapy.

The following general suggestions may also be helpful:

- Make sure you have your listener's attention before you speak.
- Be near your listener. Avoid trying to talk to someone in another room.
- Face your listener. Being able to lip read will help your listener understand what you are saying.
- Avoid speaking in the presence of background noise.
- Stand or sit as upright as possible while you are speaking. Good posture is important for speech and voice.
- Swallow before speaking to clear any pooled saliva from your mouth or throat.
- Pay attention to how you are speaking, as well as to what you are saying, as good speech requires conscious effort.
- Speak slower. Make sure every word is clear.
- Think LOUD! Exaggerate the loudness of your voice while talking.
- Begin speaking with a topic phrase, such as, "I would like to talk about..."
- Plan important or longer conversations for times when you are feeling your best.

Suggestions for Family and Friends when listening

Family and friends are often the best support for a person with Parkinson's. By following these tips and strategies, you will help to facilitate your loved one's communication:

- Get face-to-face when talking and give your full attention to the speaker.
- Try to maintain a distance of 3-6 feet and avoid conversations between rooms.
- Reduce background noise.
- Be aware that people with Parkinson's may not accurately express emotions through facial expressions because of stiff facial muscles. Try to avoid misinterpretation of what the person is communicating by not relying on facial cues.
- Indicate that you understand what the person is saying by nodding or saying "yes".
- When in doubt, repeat back what you thought was said and ask if it is correct.
- Be a relaxed listener. Give the speaker plenty of time to start and to finish what they want to say. Don't interrupt.
- Avoid talking for the person who may be having difficulty with speech. Ask for permission before responding for the person.
- Slow down the conversation or "make room" in the conversation for the person with Parkinson's to take their turn to speak.
- Suggest to the person with Parkinson's to talk in a voice that feels very loud, if speech is too quiet.
- Help to reinforce the techniques recommended by the Speech-Language Pathologist to improve speech if your loved one has received therapy.

Source: [Speech Problems and Parkinson's \(Parkinson Canada\)](#)

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