

Rehab News



Submitted By: Therapy Department at Healthcare Therapy Services, Inc.

Understanding the Impact of Aging on Communication

Communication is an important life skill that connects us to those around us. The ability to communicate effectively is important at any age, but for older adults it can be absolutely vital. Older adults need to be able to successfully describe what they need in order to avoid emergency situations. Speech Therapy can be a valuable tool for adults struggling with communication.

As people age, normal changes occur in their speech, language, memory, and swallowing. Vocal cords can become less elastic and larynx muscles can weaken, making it difficult to talk in a manner they are accustomed to. In addition to speech issues associated with normal aging, older adults may experience complications with communication or swallowing due to their heightened risk of dementia, Parkinson's disease, or stroke.

COMMON SIGNS OF COMMUNICATION BARRIERS INCLUDE:

Changes in Cognition:	Has become increasingly forgetful, can't find the right words or has trouble understanding speech. A speech therapist may be able to help determine the source of the problem and support recovery from impairment and help a patient improve memory and attention.
Changes in Eating and Swallowing:	Grows increasingly unable to swallow food, or often coughs when swallowing. A speech therapist can provide exercises to regain the ability to swallow.
Constant Hoarseness or Difficulty Speaking:	These symptoms often accompany the diagnosis of a progressive condition such as Parkinson's disease.
Aphasia after a Stroke:	Aphasia is the loss of ability to understand or express speech, caused by brain damage. Improving speech after a stroke is possible; however treatment should be pursued immediately.

At Healthcare Therapy Services our Speech-Language Pathologists can assist in differentiating between normal aging and disordered communication or swallowing function. We also provide vital services to those who have communication, cognitive, or swallowing impairments following illness, trauma, or disease.



MAY IS BETTER HEARING & SPEECH MONTH

Each May, Better Hearing & Speech Month (BHSM) provides an opportunity to raise awareness about communication disorders and the role Speech Therapists play in providing life-altering treatment.