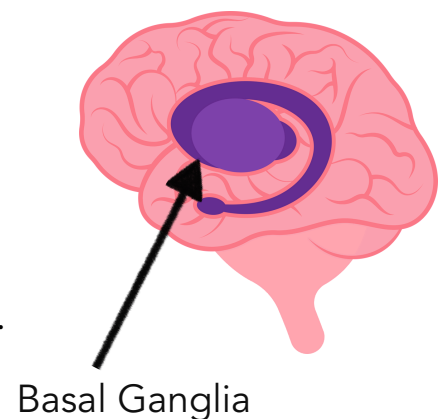


# Parkinson's Disease and its Impact on Swallowing and Communication

## What is Parkinson's Disease?

Parkinson's Disease is a progressive brain disorder caused by changes in the function of cells within a part of the brain called the basal ganglia. People with Parkinson's Disease may experience tremors, slowness in movement, muscle stiffness, and gait and balance problems. As the disease progresses, other non-motor symptoms may also develop such as incontinence, visual and cognitive problems. Due to the progressive nature of the disease, symptoms will worsen over time.



## Impact of Parkinson's Disease on swallowing

### Some symptoms include:

- Drooling
- Slow and inefficient chewing
- Longer swallow duration resulting in a long meal times
- Coughing, choking, throat clearing or having a wet voice when eating or drinking
- Discomfort or feeling of food stuck in the throat region



## Consequences of Dysphagia

Swallowing impairments (dysphagia) increases risk of food, fluid and/or saliva entering our airway and lungs leading to chest infections. Most people will cough when this happens, but persons with Parkinson's Disease have been shown to not display such signs because of reduced sensation in the throat. This may be life threatening and require a hospital admission. Inadequate food and fluid intake caused by dysphagia may also result in dehydration and malnutrition.

## Role of Speech Therapists in managing Dysphagia

Speech Therapists aim to reduce discomfort and aspiration risks related to eating or drinking. The Speech Therapist will also work with you to maintain your swallowing function for as long as possible.

You may be recommended:

- Modified diet and fluids to compensate for swallowing difficulties
- Safe feeding techniques and/or swallowing strategies
- Swallowing exercises to maintain your swallowing function
- Alternative options for feeding e.g. nasogastric tube
- Further swallowing assessments such as a Videofluoroscopy Study (VFS) or Fibreoptic Endoscopic Evaluation of Swallowing (FEES)

## Impact of Parkinson's Disease on communication

**Some symptoms include:**

- Soft voice
- Hoarse and/or rough voice
- Unclear speech
- Monotonous speech
- Short rushes of speech
- Loss of facial expression



## Consequences of communication difficulties

Communication difficulties can make everyday activities such as talking to friends or speaking on the phone challenging. This may also result in frustration and feelings of social isolation.

## Role of Speech Therapists in managing communication difficulties

Speech therapists conduct assessments to understand an individual's communication difficulties, needs and goals. Therapy is individualised to cater for different types and severity of communication difficulties.

You may be recommended:

- Compensatory strategies (e.g., clear speech techniques)
- Speech and/or voice therapy with the aim of improving or maintaining your speech and voice function
- Alternative modes of communication (e.g., using a picture board)

Should you or your loved one experience difficulties with swallowing or communication, please do not hesitate to contact us at 6363 3000 or [enquiry@wh.com.sg](mailto:enquiry@wh.com.sg).



Contributed by Speech Therapy, Rehabilitation, Allied Health Services

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