



ASHA /

Adult Speech-Language Pathology Services in Health Care



How do speech-language pathologists (SLPs) help people?

- SLPs work with people who have trouble
 - speaking
 - listening
 - reading
 - writing
 - thinking
 - swallowing



Who are speech-language pathologists?

- SLPs in health care
 - Are certified by the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA)
 - Have a master's or doctoral degree in speech-language pathology
 - Completed postgraduate clinical work
 - Passed a national examination



What do SLPs do?

- SLPs can
 - Test people to see if they have speech, language, thinking, or swallowing problems
 - Work with people to improve communication and swallowing
 - Talk with patients and families about the problems the patient is having and what can be done to help
 - Work with other professionals, like doctors, physical therapists, and dietitians



What do SLPs do? (continued)

- SLPs can
 - Help people find other ways to communicate (called augmentative and alternative communication, or AAC) when they can't speak
 - Work with insurance companies to get services paid for
 - Do research to find new and better ways to treat patients with communication and swallowing disorders



Where do SLPs work?

- In health care, SLPs work in
 - hospitals
 - rehabilitation hospitals
 - nursing homes
 - outpatient clinics
 - home health agencies
 - private practice

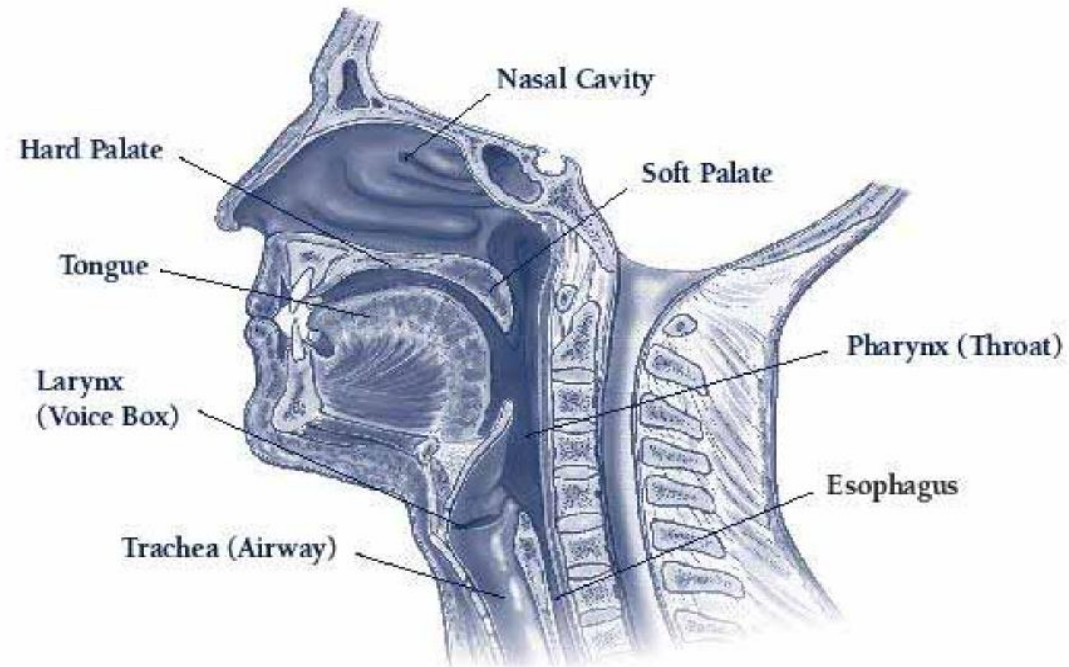


What causes speech, language, or swallowing problems?

- Communication and swallowing problems in adults can be caused by
 - stroke
 - head injury
 - diseases like Parkinson's, Alzheimer's, multiple sclerosis, and amyotrophic sclerosis (ALS)
 - breathing problems
 - head and neck cancer
 - vocal abuse (using the voice in the wrong way)
 - severe or long-term illness



Diagram of the Head and Neck





What types of disorders do SLPs treat?

- SLPs treat
 - **Aphasia** – problems speaking, understanding, reading, writing, or using numbers due to stroke or brain injury
 - **Apraxia** – problems controlling mouth muscles to speak clearly
 - **Cognitive-communication disorders** – problems with memory, reasoning, problem-solving, and attention



What types of disorders do SLPs treat? (continued)

- **Dysarthria** – weakness or tightness in speech muscles that cause slurred or very quiet speech that may be hard to understand
- **Voice disorders** – changes in how a person’s voice sounds
 - Higher or lower pitch
 - Hoarseness
 - Too soft or too loud
 - Unable to make sound



What types of disorders do SLPs treat? (continued)

- **Swallowing (Dysphagia)** – problems chewing or swallowing that can lead to
 - dehydration
 - malnutrition
 - food or liquid going into the airway, called aspiration
 - frequent pneumonia or respiratory infections
 - less enjoyment of eating
 - embarrassment when eating because of drooling or other problems
 - the need for tube feeding or other ways to get nutrition



Will speech-language pathology services help?

- Yes. People who receive SLP services make improvements in all health care settings.
 - 84% of people with a speech disorder (dysarthria or apraxia) made progress in the hospital or in rehab.
 - 81% of people with language problems after a stroke make improvements with outpatient services.
 - Over half of people in the hospital no longer needed a feeding tube after receiving swallowing treatment from an SLP.

Source: ASHA national Outcomes Measurement System (NOMS)



Who pays for speech-language pathology services?

- Medicare, Medicaid, and private insurance companies pay for services from an SLP.
 - Coverage for services will vary
 - Not everything is covered
 - You need to check with your health insurance company to find out what is covered



For more information

- Go to ASHA's Web site at www.asha.org/public for information on
 - speech, language, and swallowing disorders
 - insurance coverage for SLP services
 - how to find an SLP