

COMMUNICATION DIFFICULTIES

As a result of an Acquired Motor Disorder
e.g. Parkinson's Disease

OVERVIEW

Someone with an acquired motor disorder may start to experience difficulties in communicating. These difficulties can present in various ways such as:

- Difficulty processing what has been said and responding immediately.
- Difficulty coordinating the muscles used for speech, so that speech may become muffled or unclear.
- Difficulty controlling breathing when speaking, so the voice may be very low volume, monotone or breathy.

HELPFUL STRATEGIES TO ASSIST A PERSON WITH AN ACQUIRED MOTOR DISORDER TO COMMUNICATE:

- Ensure a good position when speaking i.e. sit or stand up straight so that it is easier to take a deep breath. Being consciously aware of breathing while speaking can help increase vocal volume. **Take a deep breath** and concentrate on speaking on the outward breath.
- If the person is speaking quietly, politely ask them if they can raise their voice. Sometimes the person may not realise their voice is very low.
- **Reduce background noise and distractions** when the person is speaking e.g. turn off TV or radio. Give the person your full attention.
- Give the person plenty of **time** to speak. Ensure they do not feel rushed.
- If you did not understand the person, don't pretend like you heard! **Be honest** and ask them to say their message again.
- Ask **clarifying questions** if you are unsure e.g. "Did you ask me if...?".
- **Assistive devices** like communication boards can be used to assist the person to communicate. You can find communication/letter boards on our website: nutricia.ie.
- **Phones/tablets** may also be used as communication aids e.g. download visual aid apps or simply take photographs of frequently used items which the person can refer to if they are having difficulty being understood.
- Where possible, encourage the person to use **shorter phrases** and emphasise the **key words**. It can be helpful to use slightly prolonged spaces between words so the listener can differentiate words.
- Encourage the person to use **non-verbal means of communication** alongside their speech if possible, e.g. pointing, gestures, writing, typing on their phone (if they find this easier).



Please visit isti.ie to locate a Speech and Language Therapist near you.

You can also visit nutricia.ie,
email nutriciacare@nutricia.com or
Freephone 1800 923 404 for more information.

