

# MAY IS BETTER SPEECH, LANGUAGE, AND HEARING MONTH

Today, as many as 1 in 6 Canadians have some type of communication disorder, many of which can be treated or better handled with appropriate support. In addition to social and psychological effects of communication disorders on families and communities, economic costs continue to rise due to lost work productivity, special education, and medical treatment.

With proper and timely treatment, most people with communication disorders can lead full and productive lives. Unfortunately, many people with communication disorders are unaware that the treatment to remedy or minimize the impact of their condition is available.

Members of OSLA, the Ontario Association of Speech-Language Pathologists and Audiologists – the professionals who specialize in the identification and treatment of communication disorders – make a special effort during the month of May to inform and educate people about hearing and speech disorders. Our goal as professionals is to educate the public that help is available.

Statistics courtesy of SAC, 2015

For additional information about Ontario's Speech-Language Pathologists, Audiologists or Communicative Disorders Assistants,

contact:

**Ontario Association of  
Speech-Language Pathologists and  
Audiologists (OSLA)**

Tel: 416-920-3676 or  
1-800-718-6752

or visit our website at

[www.osla.on.ca](http://www.osla.on.ca)

OSLA is the strong, collective, influential voice for the professions in the Province. OSLA represents, promotes and supports its members in their work on behalf of all Ontarians, especially those with speech and language disorders, voice, swallowing, hearing and balance disorders.



The Ontario Association  
of Speech-Language  
Pathologists and Audiologists

# MAY IS... BETTER SPEECH, LANGUAGE, AND HEARING MONTH



The Ontario Association  
of Speech-Language  
Pathologists and Audiologists

**Speech, language, thinking and swallowing problems** are often caused by stroke, head and neck cancers, traumatic brain injury or neurodegenerative diseases (such as Alzheimer's, dementia, Parkinson's or ALS).

#### **SOME SIGNS OF SPEECH OR LANGUAGE DISORDERS:**

- Difficulty finding and expressing the right words.
- Speaking in short, fragmented phrases.
- Saying words in the wrong order.
- Struggling to understand others when they are speaking.
- Difficulty reading and writing.
- Slurred or mumbled speech.
- Difficulty having meaningful conversations.

#### **SOME SIGNS OF SWALLOWING DISORDERS (DYSPHAGIA):**

- Coughing episodes when drinking or eating.
- Difficulty swallowing medication.
- Feeling as though food is stuck in throat.
- Avoiding certain foods or drinks because they are hard to swallow.
- Feeling embarrassed to eat in public; eating is no longer pleasurable.
- Finding it hard to chew and swallow food.
- Weight loss.
- Food, drinks or saliva falling from mouth.

**QUESTIONS? Contact a speech-language pathologist.**

THE RISK OF FALLING IS  
**3 to 4 TIMES**  
AMONG OLDER PEOPLE  
WITH BALANCE DISORDERS,  
MUSCLE WEAKNESS OR GAIT PROBLEMS



**95%** OF PEOPLE  
WITH DEMENTIA  
HAVE DIFFICULTY COMMUNICATING

INDIVIDUALS WITH  
HEARING LOSS ARE  
**2 to 5**  
TIMES  
MORE LIKELY TO  
DEVELOP DEMENTIA



**90%** OF PEOPLE  
WITH HEARING LOSS  
COULD BENEFIT FROM  
HEARING AIDS



UP TO  
**78%**  
OF STROKE PATIENTS HAVE  
A SWALLOWING DISORDER



**OVER 100,000**  
CANADIANS  
HAVE APHASIA  
*(A disorder caused by damage to parts of the brain that control language)*

**Hearing loss** and other auditory disorders may be caused by aging, noise exposure, head injury, medications or may be present from birth.  
**Balance disorders** may be caused by certain medications, inner ear problems, ear infections or head injury.

#### **SOME SIGNS OF HEARING LOSS OR OTHER AUDITORY DISORDERS:**

- Difficulty following conversations.
- Hearing but not understanding spoken words.
- Persistent discomfort in ear(s) after being exposed to loud noises.
- Frustration when trying to listen to speech or other sounds.
- Avoiding conversations and withdrawing from social situations.
- Ringing, buzzing, chirping, whistling or whooshing in ears.

#### **SOME SIGNS OF BALANCE DISORDERS:**

- Dizziness.
- Feeling fullness or pressure in the ears.
- Nausea, vomiting, light-headedness, changes in heart rate and blood pressure, fear and/or anxiety.
- Feeling as though you are moving or spinning.
- Feeling as though your environment is moving or spinning.
- Blurred vision.
- Feeling unsteady and having difficulty standing or walking.

**QUESTIONS? Contact an audiologist.**