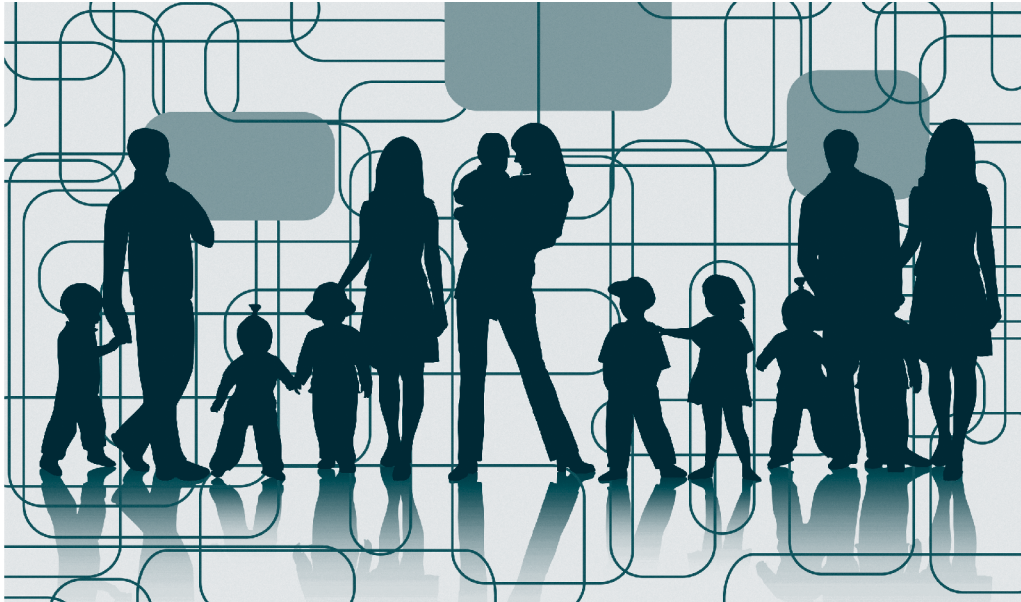


What is a Speech Pathologist?



Speech pathologists study, diagnose and treat communication disorders, including difficulties with speaking, listening, understanding language, reading, writing, social skills, stuttering and using voice.

They work with people who have difficulty communicating because of developmental delays, stroke, brain injuries, learning disability, intellectual disability, cerebral palsy, dementia and hearing loss, as well as other problems that can affect speech and language. People who experience difficulties swallowing food and drink safely can also be helped by a speech pathologist.

What do speech pathologists do?

Speech pathologists help you communicate, or when you have trouble eating and drinking.

- They are qualified health professionals.
- Speech pathologists work with people of all ages.
- They help you when you have trouble understanding and talking with other others. They help with reading, spelling and using technology or other ways to communicate.
- Speech pathologists also help people who have trouble swallowing, which can make eating and drinking difficult.

What is a Speech Pathologist?

Who can see a speech pathologist?

Anyone can see a speech pathologist for an assessment.

The speech pathologist will work with you to find out about treatments and services that are right for you.

You don't need a referral to see a speech pathologist. However, you might need one to access Medicare funding.

Types of people who might see a speech pathologist

- babies born with a cleft lip and/or palate
- preschoolers who are having trouble communicating, or have speech that is difficult to understand
- people who have a developmental language disorder that affects their ability to talk and understand others
- people who have difficulties with their speech, including childhood apraxia of speech (CAS)
- neurodiverse people, such as those who are autistic
- people who are finding it hard to learn to read and spell
- people with hearing loss, and those who communicate with them
- people who stutter
- people who use their voice professionally, such as teachers, singers or call centre workers
- people with an acquired brain injury, for example due to a car accident or stroke
- people at risk of choking or who have difficulty eating or drinking safely
- people with physical, cognitive, and/or sensory disabilities
- people who find it hard, or are unable, to communicate through speech and use alternative or augmentative communication (AAC) methods instead (for example, an electronic communication device, communication board)
- people with neurological conditions that increase over time, such as motor neurone disease, Parkinson's or dementia
- people who need surgery to remove cancer of the tongue or voice box/larynx
- people with communication or swallowing difficulties related to a mental illness (or related to the medication taken to treat a mental illness)
- young people and adults in contact with the justice system who find it difficult to communicate effectively
- children and young people with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties who have underlying communication needs that may be masked by concerning behaviours.

How do I become a speech pathologist?

Speech pathology is an accredited undergraduate or entry level masters degree. To find out more go to www.speechpathologyaustralia.org.au/education-and-careers/university-courses

How do I find a speech pathologist in my area?

Go to www.speechpathologyaustralia.org.au and click on "Find a Speech Pathologist".

For further information contact **Speech Pathology Australia** – the national peak body representing speech pathologists, the professionals who work with and advocate for people who have a communication disability and all Australian consumers of speech pathology services.