

Preparing for changes in speech

Use this guide to:

- understand why speech changes with MND
- know what to look for
- understand what you can do now, and later
- talk to carers and family about how they can help
- talk with your speech pathologist about what to expect.

It includes simple strategies, tips, and support options for you and your family.

About this guide

This guide is designed to be used when **preparing for changes in speech**. It is part of the *speech and communication in MND* series of guides and practical tools. This series was developed with MND Queensland, people living with MND, and their carers to help prepare for and adjust to speech changes, get support, and stay connected.

Scan to learn more



Why speech changes – what’s happening in the body

MND affects the nerves that control the muscles we use to speak and breathe. As MND progresses, this can cause changes in the body.

Some of these changes might include:



Lips, tongue and soft palate

You might notice weakness in your tongue, slurring or need to repeat yourself.



Voice

Your voice may get softer or harder to project. You might find it difficult to raise your voice.



Breathing

You may have to take more breaths while talking, or run out of breath before you finish a sentence.



Tiredness

Speech may become quieter and less clear when you’re tired.



Early changes you might notice:

- Words sound slightly slurred.
- People ask you to repeat yourself.
- You run out of breath more quickly.
- Talking is harder when you are tired.

See a speech pathologist if you are experiencing these symptoms.

How a speech pathologist can help

A speech pathologist can help you plan ahead, choose the right tools, explore communication devices, and record your voice if you want to. They focus on strategies that help you stay clear and connected.

What I can do

Act early

Taking action now while speech is strong will help you adjust to changes now, and give you more choice and control later. See a speech pathologist as soon as you notice changes.

Prepare and plan

Planning ahead involves thinking about what you want in the future, and talking about it with family. Having hard conversations now, and recording your wishes, can bring peace of mind.

Consider voice banking

- Recording your voice now means that you can use a digital voice that sounds like you in the future.
- See *Voice and message banking* for more.

Get support

It's normal to feel worried, sad or unsure about the future. Talking with your speech pathologist, GP, or others in your support team can help you plan and feel reassured. See *Mental health and wellbeing* for more.

Try these tips

- Slow down and speak clearly.
- Take a breath before you start talking.
- Reduce background noise (e.g. TV, radio).
- Plan important conversations for when you are less tired.

Apply for funding

Apply early for funding through NDIS or MND organisations so equipment is ready when you need it. See *Funding your communication system* for more.

Tips for carers and family

Suggest these tips to your carers, family and friends, and healthcare professionals. If others understand practical ways to help, communicating becomes easier.



Be patient

Let me finish speaking.



Face each other to talk

So you can see and hear each other clearly.



Check back

Repeat what you think you heard. Don't pretend to understand.



Support planning

Help organise appointments, funding, and paperwork if needed.

Next steps

- 1 Talk with your speech pathologist:** explore boards, apps, and devices that can help now and in the future.
- 2 Apply for funding:** NDIS or MND organisations may help with equipment and devices. See *Funding your communication system*.
- 3 When speech gets harder:** See the next guide in the series.

Staying connected as your needs change

There are many ways to keep communicating as your needs change. See these guides and tools to find out more:

- *Voice and message banking*
- *Building your communication system*
- *Communication tools and technology (AAC)*
- *'I have MND' wallet card*
- *My care needs form*
- *PAS (partner-assisted scanning) and communication boards*