



Staying connected without speech: what you can do

Use this guide to:

- know what to expect when speech is limited or no longer possible
- stay connected with a mix of low- and high-tech tools
- get tips to support communication, manage fatigue, and stay involved in daily life
- take a step-by-step approach to adjust supports as needs change
- stay engaged with the people and activities that matter most
- talk to carers and family about how they can help
- explore options with your speech pathologist to see what works for you.

About this guide

This guide is designed to be used for **staying connected without 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



Communication is possible – even without speech

Communication is not only about needs – it's about making sure you can be yourself.

With the right mix of tools, support, and planning, you can still stay connected to the people and activities that matter most.

Some things to consider:



Communication may mostly rely on a mix of tools and strategies including low- and high-tech tools.



It helps to have people that know how to support your communication.



Increasing care needs may mean carers are more involved in supporting daily communication.



Tiredness can make communication harder. Having backup options helps you save energy.



Changes you might notice:

- Speech may not be possible, or very hard to understand.
- People who know you well are more likely to understand you.
- Speech sounds unclear, slurred, or too soft.
- You rely mostly on gestures, facial expression, or yes/no signals.
- Fatigue can make speaking very hard.
- Muscle weakness may make pointing, typing, or writing harder
- You may need help to set up or access communication tools.
- Conversations can take much longer or feel too tiring.
- You often switch to a device or yes/no because speech isn't effective.

See these guides for more about how to stay connected:

- *Building your communication system*
- *Communication tools and technology (AAC)*

Staying involved in daily life

Communication is about more than care needs. It helps you keep your identity, interests, and routines. Even without speech, communication tools and technology can support you to stay involved in daily life.

Do things enjoy

You can still follow your local footy club, do crafts, listen to music or play online games.

Express yourself

Share feelings, humour, and personality.



Stay social

Join family chats, share jokes, or message friends.

Make choices

Say what you'd like to watch, eat, or do, or be involved in healthcare decisions.

Stay informed

Follow the news, read about your favourite topics, or scroll through community updates.

Save energy

For the conversations or activities that matter most to you.

Reducing fatigue

- Use short messages, stored phrases, or simple yes/no when tired.
- Let carers know if you need to pause, or change method (e.g. device to board).
- Plan important chats for your best time of day.

Your speech pathologist and occupational therapist can help you to use your communication system in everyday situations that are important to you.

How carers and family can help

As speech gets harder, support from family and carers can make a big difference. Share these tips to help you stay connected in ways that feel respectful, calm, and meaningful. See *Carer guide: Staying connected without speech* to find out more.



Adapt your approach

Learn and respect my preferred signals.



Use my communication system

Rotate between tools depending on fatigue and context.



Check back

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



Support all communication

Encourage communication for enjoyment and identity (not just care tasks).



Be patient

Allow silence while I prepare a message.



Be prepared

Keep devices charged and back-up systems handy.



Get support

For support with speech and communication:

- Contact your local MND Association for equipment loans, advice, peer support.
- See your speech pathologist for help choosing and adapting tools.

Mental health and wellbeing

Communication changes and speech loss can put a heavy emotional load on you and those who support you. You may feel isolated, frustrated, or disconnected – this is normal. Tiredness, reduced independence, and problems expressing yourself can increase these feelings.

You are not alone. If communication is getting harder or distressing, support is available. Talk with your speech pathologist, doctor, or support coordinator about counselling, peer groups, or other supports. See *Mental health and wellbeing* for more.