

# Progressive Supranuclear Palsy (PSP)

## What is progressive supranuclear palsy?

Progressive Supranuclear Palsy (PSP) is a progressive neurological condition that affects nerve cells in the brain. This can affect movement, behaviour, cognition and vision **a combination of the symptoms caused by PSP can lead to difficulties in communication and swallowing.**

If you wish to know more information about your diagnosis and support available in your area, please visit the charity website on [www.pspassociation.org.uk](http://www.pspassociation.org.uk)

## How PSP can affect communication?

The majority of people diagnosed with PSP will experience problems with their communication.

Typical characteristics include:

- Slurred speech (dysarthria)
- Strained/harsh/hoarse/quiet voice
- Speaking at a very fast rate
- Reduced facial expression/ability to maintain eye contact
- Small hand-writing
- Reduced body language, including hand gesture

People with PSP can experience decreased cognitive functioning, which may also impact on communication. People may experience:

- Slow thinking/ slow learning/ reduced attention and inability to follow fast conversations
- Losing one's train of thought while speaking
- Difficulties problem-solving and forward planning

- Problems storing and retrieving memories
- Difficulty making sense of perceptions/ concepts
- Problems with language (e.g. word-finding difficulties)
- Difficulty sequencing actions, finding it harder to carry-out everyday tasks.

## How can Speech and Language Therapy help?

Your Speech and Language Therapist can:

- Offer advice/ strategies and provide specific exercises/ programmes to help improve speech intelligibility
- Introduce alternative communication systems, which can help you to express yourself if speech becomes difficult

## How can PSP affect swallowing?

PSP may affect your ability to swallow. Symptoms may include:

- Coughing/ choking when eating and drinking
- Drooling and poor saliva management
- Difficulty clearing and controlling food/ drink in the mouth
- Delayed swallow reflex
- Food sticking in throat
- Problems swallow medication
- Discomfort in chest or throat
- Recurrent chest infections
- Increased phlegm which may be difficult to clear
- Fatigue when eating and drinking
- Reduced oral intake leading to malnutrition, weight loss and reduced energy, dehydration and constipation

## How can Speech and Language Therapy help?

It is important to identify symptoms of swallowing difficulties early. The Speech and Language Therapist can offer advice regarding swallowing techniques, food/drink texture modification (dependent on the stage of your condition) and saliva management.

They can provide compensatory strategies to help ensure food and drink is being swallowed safely. Alternative methods of eating and drinking (e.g. feeding tubes) may also need to be explored in the long-term.

## How to contact us

**Speech and Language Therapy Departments**  
**Office hours: Monday-Friday 9am - 4.30pm**

University Hospital of North Durham  
**Telephone: 0191 3332591**

Darlington Memorial Hospital  
**Telephone: 01325 743152**

## Useful contacts

**It is very important to talk to your GP if you have problems swallowing**

**South Tees Nurse Specialist Team - 01642 854319**

**Charity Website:** [www.pspassociation.org.uk](http://www.pspassociation.org.uk)

## Contact details



Central Appointments Bureau  
Speech & Language Therapy  
Bishop Auckland General Hospital  
Cockton Hill Road  
Bishop Auckland  
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Tel: 01388 455200

## Please help us:

We need your comments, concerns complaints and compliments to deliver the best service possible. Please let us know by speaking to a member of our staff. We learn from your feedback and use the information to improve and develop our services.

If you would like to talk to someone outside the service contact the **Patient Experience Team** on **0800 783 5774**, or email [cdda-tr.PatientExperienceCDDFT@nhs.net](mailto:cdda-tr.PatientExperienceCDDFT@nhs.net).

We can make this information available in Braille, large print, audio or other languages on request.

Date Published: May 2023  
Date of Review: May 2026  
Responsibility: Speech & Language Therapy  
Reference No: PIL/CG/0475  
Version: 2