

Fact sheet:

How can I help someone who has difficulty using words?

Set the scene for good communication:

- Make a quiet area for talking – turn off the TV, shut the door
- Be patient. Allow plenty of time for the conversation
- Make sure only one person talks at a time
- Have conversations when the person is not tired or upset
- Let the person speak for themselves as much as possible
- Be supportive. Accept the person's communication attempts

If the person has trouble getting their message across:

- Remind the person to use any strategies or equipment from the speech pathologist, such as communication boards
- Find out the topic – "are you talking about the food?"
- Ask questions that only need 'yes' or 'no' answers
- Ask questions that only need short answers
- Tell the person what you have understood so they can confirm or fill in gaps

If you do not understand what the person has said:

- Be honest – tell the person you have not understood
- Ask the person to say it again
- Ask the person to say it another way
- Encourage the person to also use other ways to get their message across, such as:
 - o Pointing and body actions (gestures)
 - o Writing or drawing – give the person a pen and paper

If the person gets frustrated with communication:

- Acknowledge that you can see they are frustrated
- Reassure the person that it is not their fault
- You may need to take a break or move onto another topic
- Remember to come back to the topic at a better time

More information

More information is available at Benalla Health.

Phone (03) 5761 4500 and ask to speak to a speech pathologist.