

Communicating clearly with speech

Top tips

- Only use one or two information words in a sentence and make a break between each sentence. Have only one idea in a sentence. – e.g. have you got a pain?..... do you want some medicine?
- Use everyday words wherever you can – rather than medical terms. Use very literal language and use direct rather than abstract phrases e.g. 'have you got a pain?' rather than 'how do you feel?'.
- Don't talk too fast, and give the person plenty of time to respond to what you've said – it takes time for many people to process the words they hear.
- Check back that the person has understood what you have said – ask them to tell you what they think you said.
- Use very literal language – use direct rather than abstract phrases, idioms or metaphors.
- Use gestures when speaking –gestures and facial expressions give visual clues about the meaning of what you are saying.
- Use pictures, symbols or objects in the environment to support what you are saying.
- Think about the environment. If it is too noisy and busy, the person may be distracted and find it harder to concentrate on what you are saying.
- Where possible, take information from the patient's carers about how much they understand, how they communicate and how to communicate with them.