

## FACT SHEET



According to Statistics Canada seniors represent the fastest growing segment of the population in Canada. This segment is expected to make up ¼ of the population (9.2 million Canadians) by 2041.

### Facts about Communication Disorders and Aging:

- Hearing loss is the third most prevalent chronic disability among older adults
- 20% of adults over 65, 40% over 75 and 80% of nursing home residents have a significant hearing problem.
- 6-12% of seniors experience speech, language or voice difficulties.

The services of speech-language pathologists and audiologists help seniors to improve their ability to communicate which allows them to optimize their health, independence, safety, socialization and overall quality of life.

### What Services do Speech-Language Pathologists and Audiologists Provide to Seniors?

- **Speech-language pathologists** provide assessment, treatment and follow-up for: difficulties speaking or understanding (expressive and receptive language problems and motor speech disorders), voice problems, thinking and memory problems (cognitive) and swallowing difficulties.

#### Communication, speech, language and swallowing problems in seniors can be caused by:

- Stroke (a “brain” attack; interruption of blood supply to brain)
- Head injury
- Neurological diseases (e.g., Parkinson’s, Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis/ALS)
- Tumours
- Respiratory illnesses
- Effects of medications
- Alzheimer’s disease and related dementias or delirium
- Psychiatric disorders

- **Audiologists** provide assessment, treatment and follow-up regarding: hearing loss, balance problems, tinnitus (noises or ringing in the ears or head when no external sound is present), related disorders

#### Hearing related disorders in seniors can be caused by:

- Aging process
- Noise exposure
- Heredity
- Middle ear dysfunction
- Medications that affect hearing (Drugs that are toxic to ears)
- Neurological diseases (e.g., stroke)
- Head injury
- Tumours



## What types of recommendations might Speech-Language Pathologists and Audiologists make to Seniors?

- **Speech-Language Pathologists** might recommend:
  - Direct treatment
  - Further instrumental examination (e.g., videofluoroscopy)
  - Referrals for further investigations (i.e. ENT, occupational therapist, audiologist or other appropriate health care professionals)
  - Diet/texture modification and/or safe feeding strategies
  - Compensatory communication strategies
  - Use of alternative and/or augmentative devices to assist with communication (e.g., computer systems)
  - Client/family counselling
  - Establishing links to community resources – day centres, long-term support groups/programs
  
- **Audiologists** might recommend:
  - Consultation with an otolaryngologist (Ear-Nose-Throat/ENT physician)
  - Use of hearing aids or other assistive listening devices
  - Aural rehabilitation (Implementation of compensatory communication strategies)
  - Consideration of cochlear implants
  - Client/family counselling
  - Combination of these and other supportive strategies
  
- The services speech-language pathologists and audiologists provide can be: consultative, direct/indirect, individual/group, intensive, long-term support groups/programs, short term/intermittent
  
- Work settings include: ambulatory/outpatient facilities, clinics, home care, hospitals, long-term care facilities, private practice, rehabilitation centres
  
- Consumers should seek the services of a qualified professional. Speech-language pathologists and audiologists in Canada must hold a minimum of a Masters degree in Speech-Language Pathology or Audiology or equivalent. In some provinces S-LPs and audiologists are regulated and must hold a license. In others, they should be a member of their provincial/territorial and/or national professional association. CASLPA also grants national certification to speech-language pathologists and audiologists who: hold full membership in CASLPA, meet clinical training requirements and successfully pass CASLPA's certification exam.
  
- Speech-language pathologists and audiologists are important collaborative partners in the primary health care system, working to maximize communication and, in turn, participation in the community. Using the services of a speech-language pathologist or audiologist helps ensure seniors can continue to enjoy engaging, productive and rewarding lives.

**Early detection is vital! If you suspect a problem consult your yellow pages or visit our website to find a speech-language pathologist or audiologist near you.**

[www.caslpa.ca](http://www.caslpa.ca)