

Guidelines for Referring to Speech-Language Pathology Services

ACUTE CARE

This guidelines document is designed to help health care providers determine the need for a referral of a patient to a speech-language pathologist (SLP). It does not take the place of a comprehensive evaluation.



Patient's Name: _____ Date: _____

Referring Professional: _____

Instructions

1. Observe the patient, review the medical record, and/or interview care partners (e.g., nurse, family, or care partners from the prior setting).
2. Answer "yes" (Y) or "no" (N) for each question. If any question is answered "yes," refer the patient to an SLP.

Medical Factors		
Did the patient experience a new neurological event (e.g., stroke, traumatic brain injury [TBI], concussion, neurosurgery, or other neurological change) that impacted speech, language, swallowing, or cognition?	Y	N
Was a tracheostomy or laryngectomy performed during the current hospitalization?	Y	N
Does the patient have a chronic tracheostomy or laryngectomy with a change from baseline in their voice, communication, or swallowing status?	Y	N
Did the patient have surgery to the head, neck, or gastrointestinal system that impacted voice, communication, or swallowing (e.g., oral resection, anterior cervical spinal surgery, esophagectomy)?	Y	N
Does the patient have delirium (diagnosed or suspected)?	Y	N
Does the patient have acute or recurrent respiratory compromise with associated voice or swallowing difficulty?	Y	N
Did the patient experience multiple, prolonged, or difficult intubations during the current hospitalization?	Y	N
Does the patient have significant weight loss, dehydration, or failure to thrive that is associated with swallowing difficulty?	Y	N

Swallowing		
Does the patient have a history of dysphagia, or was the patient previously on a modified diet due to swallowing difficulty?	Y	N
Did the patient fail a swallowing screen?	Y	N
Does the patient experience coughing, choking, or a wet/gurgly voice during or after eating or drinking?	Y	N
Does the patient have difficulty managing secretions, food, or liquid?	Y	N

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Does the patient have slowed or ineffective chewing and swallowing, or does it take them longer to eat meals?	Y	N
Does food, liquid, or secretions remain in the mouth after swallowing?	Y	N
Does food or liquid leak from the nose?	Y	N
Does the patient report painful swallowing or food “sticking” in the neck, throat, or chest?	Y	N
Does the patient have difficulty coordinating breathing and swallowing?	Y	N
Is the patient dependent on others for feeding or oral care?	Y	N

Communication

Does the patient have difficulty communicating due to intubation or the presence of an artificial airway (e.g., post-tracheostomy or post-laryngectomy)?	Y	N
Does the patient with a known communication disorder (pre-admission) have difficulty communicating with care partners and/or staff?	Y	N
Does the patient have new difficulty expressing basic needs (e.g., reporting pain or requesting assistance)?	Y	N
Does the patient have new difficulty communicating preferences and goals related to medical decision making and their plan of care?	Y	N
Does the patient have new difficulty communicating with care partners?	Y	N
Does the patient have new difficulty understanding information (e.g., following directions, understanding discharge instructions)?	Y	N
Does the patient report changes in reading or writing abilities?	Y	N

Cognition

Does the patient have new difficulty focusing on a task or a conversation?	Y	N
Does the patient have new difficulty safely navigating their environment?	Y	N
Does the patient demonstrate new impulsivity (e.g., getting out of bed without assistance, refusing medical treatment without considering the consequences)?	Y	N
Does the patient have new difficulty planning or sequencing tasks (e.g., brushing teeth, using the bathroom)?	Y	N
Does the patient have new difficulty remembering (e.g., remembering a medication schedule)?	Y	N

Next Steps

If any question above is answered “yes,” refer the patient to the SLP team for further evaluation.

Please contact healthservices@asha.org for questions about this resource.