

NEUROTALK

CLIENT INFORMATION SERIES

AAC Devices: A Guide for Adults

What augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) is, and how adults can access it.

Augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) includes a range of ways to support or replace spoken communication. It can include gestures, facial expressions, pointing, writing, picture or letter boards, communication books, apps and speech-generating devices.

AAC can support adults whose speech or other communication methods do not fully meet their needs, including people living with conditions such as stroke, motor neurone disease, cerebral palsy or acquired brain injury. It can be used temporarily or long term, alongside speech or as an alternative to speech, to help people express their needs, thoughts, feelings and choices and participate more fully in everyday life.

Who can benefit from AAC?

AAC may benefit adults whose speech, language or other communication methods do not fully meet their needs. This may include people who have difficulty expressing themselves, being understood by others or communicating reliably in everyday situations.

AAC may be helpful for people living with conditions such as:

- Stroke or acquired brain injury – when communication difficulties affect speaking, understanding or expressing messages.
- Motor neurone disease (MND) or other progressive neurological conditions – when speech becomes less clear, more effortful or less reliable over time.
- Cerebral palsy or other conditions affecting movement and speech – when additional communication methods support self-expression.
- Parkinson's disease or other neurological conditions – when changes in voice, speech clarity or communication make everyday interactions more difficult.
- Head and neck surgery or other medical conditions – when speech is temporarily or permanently affected.
- AAC can also be useful for people who can speak but are difficult to understand, become fatigued when speaking, or find communication more challenging in certain situations.

AAC can be used temporarily or long term, alongside speech or as an alternative to speech. The most appropriate options depend on the person's individual needs, preferences and communication goals.

Does using AAC stop someone from talking?

No. Using AAC does not prevent someone from developing or continuing to use their speech. AAC can be used alongside spoken communication, giving people another way to express themselves when speech is difficult, tiring or not enough to get their message across. Research suggests that AAC does not hinder speech

development and may support spoken communication for some people. However, the effect on speech varies between individuals, and AAC should not be viewed as a guarantee that speech will improve.

AAC provides an additional way to communicate, helping people share their thoughts, needs, feelings and choices, whether or not their speech changes over time.

TYPES OF AAC

Many people use a combination of AAC methods. The most appropriate options depend on the person's communication needs, preferences, abilities and everyday environments.

Low-tech Communication books, picture or letter boards, word cards and written messages. These do not require electronic power and can provide a useful communication option alongside speech or other AAC systems.	High-tech Communication apps on smartphones or tablets, and dedicated speech-generating devices. Messages can be spoken aloud using recorded or computer-generated speech. Access may include touching the screen, using switches or eye-gaze technology, depending on the person's needs.	Unaided AAC Communication methods that use the person's body rather than an external aid, such as gestures, facial expressions, pointing and sign language.
---	--	---

HOW TO ACCESS AN AAC DEVICE

1	Assessment with a speech pathologist Your speech pathologist will explore your communication needs, goals and preferences. Together, you can consider different AAC systems and how you might access them. We trial different systems and access methods (touch, switch, eye-gaze) to find what best suits your communication, physical, and cognitive needs.
2	Trial period You may trial different devices, apps and communication systems to find what works best for you. Trials help determine whether a system meets your communication needs in everyday situations, with input from you and the people who support you.
3	Funding application Your speech pathologist prepares reports and justification for NDIS, My Aged Care, MASS, or another relevant funding pathway.
4	Purchase & setup If funding is approved, or you choose to purchase a system privately, your AAC system can be set up to suit your communication needs. This may include selecting vocabulary, arranging the display, choosing a voice and setting up any access equipment.
5	Training & ongoing support You and your communication partners can learn how to use and support the system in everyday life. Your speech pathologist can review the system over time and help adapt it as your communication needs, preferences or circumstances change.

FUNDING OPTIONS IN QUEENSLAND

There may be several ways to access funding or assistance with AAC equipment, depending on your circumstances and eligibility.

- **NDIS:** Assistive technology funding may be available for eligible participants when the AAC system meets NDIS funding requirements.
- **Medical Aids Subsidy Scheme (MASS):** Queensland Health provides subsidies for eligible communication aids, including some speech-generating devices and AAC systems.
- **My Aged Care:** Eligible older people may be able to access communication equipment through the Assistive Technology and Home Modifications (AT-HM) scheme.
- **Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA):** Eligible veterans may be able to access communication aids through the Rehabilitation Appliances Program (RAP).
- **Private health insurance or self-funding:** Depending on your policy and the equipment, you may be able to access a rebate or purchase an AAC system privately.

For more information:

- [NDIS](#)
- [Queensland Health – MASS communication aids](#)
- [My Aged Care – Assistive Technology and Home Modifications](#)
- [DVA – Rehabilitation Appliances Program](#)

Funding eligibility, available equipment and application processes vary. Your speech pathologist can help you explore suitable options and identify the relevant requirements.

NEUROTALK

admin@neurotalktherapy.com.au · neurotalktherapy.com.au · Brisbane · Ipswich · Gold Coast