

# Preserving Function within Progressive Conditions: Maintenance Therapy & Speech Language Pathology

As experts in the areas of communication, cognitive-linguistics, and dysphagia, speech language pathologists (SLPs) are often providing care to patients with chronic and progressive conditions that negatively impact these areas of function. Maintenance therapy is established and implemented by the SLP to maintain a patient's current condition and prevent or slow further decline.

## Chronic and Progressive Conditions Impacting Function May Include

- Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis
- Huntington's Disease
- Vascular Dementia
- Multiple Sclerosis
- Lewy Body Dementia
- Parkinson's Disease
- Frontotemporal Dementia
- Alzheimer's Disease

## Potential Areas Affected by Chronic Conditions within the Scope of the SLP:

- Difficulty chewing and/or swallowing
- Apraxia
- Dysarthria
- Vocal quality impairments
- Forgetfulness and confusion
- Behavioral issues
- Problems following conversations
- Trouble verbalizing wants and needs
- Difficulty following instructions

## Possible Interventions for SLP Maintenance Therapy:

Speech & Language	Voice	Cognition	Dysphagia
Listener/communication partner training	Breath support training	Utilization of memory aids (calendars, schedules, labels)	Diet texture/consistency analysis and recommendations
Development and use of appropriate environmental accommodations	Energy conservation techniques	Training and use of technological innovations (clocks, GPS, medication management device)	Adaptive equipment recommendations and training
Telegraphic speech training	Vocal exercises to maintain vocal quality	Designing and use of memory/photo books	Altering texture, temperature, or taste of foods to facilitate safety and ease of swallowing and to improve intake
Utilizing nonverbal communication skills (gestures, writing, alphabet boards)	Vocal hygiene education	Executive or self-regulatory skills such as goal setting, self-monitoring, and problem solving	Patient and caregiver training with verbal prompts and patient-specific cuing to improve intake
AAC device instruction and training	Development and use of voice banking	Initiating or maintaining routines or roles in the individual's living community	Environmental modifications to improve mealtime experience

## Implementing a Functional Maintenance Program for SLP

**Documentation must support the need for the skills of an SLP, including:**

- Past and current medical history
- Assessment of current abilities
- Identification of underlying conditions affecting function
- Patient specific goals and targets

**Interventions should be patient-specific and relevant to the POC:**

- Compensatory strategies
- Adaptive techniques
- Equipment needs
- Patient/caregiver training and demonstration

**The duration of the episode of care (EOC) for maintenance therapy is typically shorter than a rehabilitation EOC. The goal is to:**

- Assess
- Implement compensatory strategies/adaptations and/or train in appropriate activities/exercises
- Safely transition the responsibility of implementing the program to the patient and /or caregivers

**SLPs should involve the patient and the IDT by relaying and communicating evaluation findings, discussing the ST plan of care and goals, treatment interventions, response to treatment, and discharge planning throughout the entire episode of care.**

Please refer to Reliant's *Preserving Function within Progressive Conditions: SLP* presentation for a detailed guide to maintenance therapy and ST.