

Aphasia

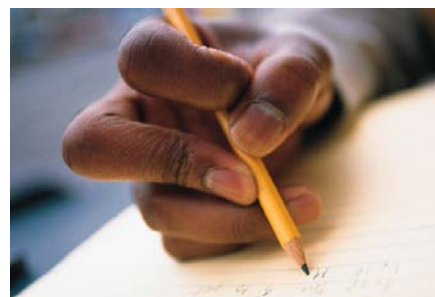
What it is, communication tips, and treatments

This handout explains what aphasia is and how to best communicate with someone who has aphasia.

What is aphasia?

Aphasia is a language disorder. It can occur when there is damage in the part of the brain that controls language. Some things that can cause aphasia are stroke, head injury, brain tumor, or certain nervous system disorders.

Aphasia affects the way a person understands and expresses language. This includes speaking, listening, reading, and writing. The level of language impairment varies from person to person. It depends on how much damage in the brain occurred and where exactly the damage is.



Aphasia affects all aspects of communication – speaking, listening, reading, and writing.

What are the best ways to communicate with someone who has aphasia?

Here are some tips for communicating with someone who has aphasia:

- Create a quiet, calm setting:
 - Dim the lights.
 - Turn off the TV and radio.
 - Get rid of background noise.
 - Have people speak one at a time.
- Give the person with aphasia time to speak and time to respond.
- Express your meaning in more than one way. Besides talking, you might:
 - Draw.
 - Use gestures.

- Write down your message or question.
 - Ask questions that can be answered with “yes” or “no.”
 - Give the person specific choices.
 - Use facial expressions to emphasize what you are saying.
- Encourage and support the person as they try to communicate in any way. Do not correct them often.
 - Keep your communication simple, but use adult language.

How is aphasia treated?

In the hospital, the patient and family members will work with a speech language pathologist (SLP). Together, you will explore language strengths and weaknesses and set up a treatment plan. Some patients will regain some language skills without treatment. This means the treatment plan may change daily, based on the patient’s progress.

People with aphasia often continue to recover language skills for many months or even years after their injury. Because of this, we advise you to keep working with a speech language pathologist after discharge from the hospital. Talk with your hospital SLP, social worker, and doctors about how to get a referral to an SLP and how to find one in your area.

To Learn More

Visit these websites to learn more about aphasia:

- American Speech-Language-Hearing Association: www.asha.org
- Aphasia Hope: www.aphasiahope.org
- National Aphasia Association: <http://aphasia.org/index.html>
- National Stroke Association: www.stroke.org
- Academy of Neurologic Communication Disorders and Sciences: www.asha.org/slp/evidence_ancds.htm

Questions?

Your questions are important. Call your doctor or health care provider if you have questions or concerns.

Speech Pathology:
206-598-4852