



# Aphasia

## Background

Aphasia is an acquired language impairment that may cause difficulties with verbal and/or written expression and/or auditory and/or reading comprehension. It is a result of such brain injuries as head trauma, brain tumor, infection, and stroke. Stroke or cerebrovascular accident (CVA), to the left hemisphere of the brain, is the leading cause of aphasia.

## How to improve communication abilities

- Meet with a speech language pathologist to help you and your family to learn new language strategies
- In addition to talking, communicate using gestures, speech-generating devices, and facial expressions
- Interact with people and practice communicating with them! Participate in activities that you enjoy such as support groups, book clubs, and choral singing



## Strategies for communicating with aphasia

- Let the person you are communicating with know that you have aphasia and that you may need extra time to say what you want to say
- Try to draw, write, or gesture to express your message
- If you are stuck trying to say a word or phrase, describe what it looks like or what it is used for
- If you do not understand what someone says, ask them to repeat what they said or to say it in a different way
- Do not give up when trying to talk – try saying what you want to say in a different way
- Do not isolate yourself – interact with others and keep communicating!



## Strategies for communication partners

- Get the person's attention before you start a conversation
- Notice their body language and gestures
- Talk in a quiet place, avoiding background noise such as a TV or radio
- Remember that aphasia is not hearing loss – shouting will not help
- Use simple language but do not "talk down" – aphasia does not affect intellect
- Use shorter sentences and repeat key words
- Give the person extra time to speak
- Avoid finishing the other person's sentences or correcting their speech
- Use drawings, gestures, writing, and facial expressions
- Ask more 'yes' and 'no' questions and fewer open-ended questions
- Speak slowly and be encouraging

## Resources

- [National Aphasia Association](#) provides more information about aphasia, treatment options, and community support groups
- [Aphasia Hope](#) helps ensure that people with aphasia and their caregivers have access to the best possible treatments available
- [American Stroke Association](#) provides information related to prevention and treatment of strokes

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