



Primary Progressive Aphasia (PPA)

Background

What is Primary Progressive Aphasia?

Primary Progressive Aphasia (PPA) is a neurologic disease that causes language abilities to decline over time. PPA is one type of Aphasia and is a form of Frontotemporal Dementia. It results from decline of the frontotemporal lobe. When the decline occurs in the language areas of the frontotemporal lobe, PPA will develop.



Onset and Symptoms

Symptoms of PPA usually come on slowly. On average, people are diagnosed with PPA at 60 years of age. Common symptoms include difficulties with speech and language. Progression of PPA may result in the loss of the abilities to speak, write, and understand language. PPA may also evolve into a broad dementia.

Three Types of PPA

Each case of PPA is different and may have symptoms that do not fit perfectly into one type of PPA. People may have symptoms from multiple types of PPA.

1. *Logopenic Variant*: difficulty thinking of words, using different words than intended, difficulty repeating sentences, pausing while speaking
2. *Semantic Variant*: difficulty understanding spoken or written language, difficulty naming objects, difficulty understanding meanings of words
3. *Progressive nonfluent/agrammatic Variant*: poor grammar, difficulty understanding long sentences, sound errors while speaking



Some Treatment Options

- **Speech and Language Therapy**
 - Speech language pathologists (SLPs) help persons with PPA use their existing skills to maintain and/or improve communication.
 - SLPs work with persons with PPA find strategies to maximize their communication function. SLPs also work with family members and caregivers to provide practice activities and tips.
 - In some cases, SLPs teach persons with PPA to use electronic or non-electronic communication systems in addition to – or instead of verbal communication.
 - If swallow safety is a concern, SLPs work on this.
- **Coping and Support Groups**
 - Aphasia support groups can be helpful for coping with PPA.
 - Participating in support groups is a great way to maintain communication skills and practice strategies.
 - Finding a support group and coping strategies can reduce feelings of isolation and improve quality of life.
- **Family/Loved One Support**
 - Family members and loved ones can help persons with PPA maintain communication skills. They can also provide support and patience to decrease frustration and improve quality of life.
- **Long-Term Care Personnel/Caregivers**
 - In most cases, people with PPA can continue to take care of themselves into the late stages of the disease. However, in some cases, long-term care personnel may become needed in late stages.

Family/Support System Information

It can be helpful for family members to practice communication strategies with their loved one with PPA. Some common strategies include: 1) speaking slowly and clearly; 2) presenting information one piece at a time; 3) pointing to visual aids and providing clues when your loved one has trouble saying a word (for example: “What is the first letter?” and “Can you describe it?”); 4) decreasing background noise; and 5) not filling in words or correcting mistakes unless asked to by your loved one with PPA. Most importantly: treat your loved one with respect and always provide support, care, and comfort when needed.





Cognitive-Community Integration Lab

“Active Brain, Healthy Brain”

Resources

A related brochure on this website: “Support for Caregivers of Individuals with PPA.” ([link](#))

Cleveland Clinic: [Primary Progressive Aphasia \(PPA\): Diagnosis, Tests, and Treatment](#)

Mayo Clinic: [Primary progressive aphasia - Symptoms and causes](#)

National Aphasia Organization: [Primary Progressive Aphasia](#)

Tactus Therapy: [Primary Progressive Aphasia - What is PPA?](#)

UC San Francisco: [Primary Progressive Aphasia | Memory and Aging Center](#)

PPA Support Groups: [Support for People with FTD \(Frontotemporal Degeneration\) | AFTD](#)

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