



MnCAN

living successfully with aphasia

What is Aphasia?

Aphasia is a language disorder that can impair the ability to communicate.

Aphasia can impact listening understanding, reading understanding, talking, and/or writing. Aphasia is most often caused when a stroke injures areas of the brain that control speech and language.

Aphasia is not a problem of intelligence.

What happens in the brain to cause aphasia?

A stroke happens when there is blockage or a rupture of a blood vessel in brain.

A stroke in the left side of the brain causes aphasia.

Other things can cause aphasia: brain tumors, infections, head injuries or neurologic progressive diseases.

What else might you notice after a stroke?

- Difficulty seeing objects on the right-side
- Feeling **tired**
- Feeling more **emotional**
- Harder to pay **attention**
- Depression
- Doing the same thing over and over
- Speech sounds are not as clear
- **Weakness on right-side** of your body
- **Swallowing difficulty also called dysphagia**
- Dysarthria may make your **speech sound slurred**, slow or effortful due to muscle weakness of lips and tongue
- Apraxia of speech is an **difficulty sequencing speech movements**

What do people with aphasia really want?

- Friendship

- Day to day communication
- Participate in a conversation
- Participate in family decisions

What are some tips to communicate with a person with aphasia?

- Keep communication simple, but adult. Emphasize key words.
- Reduce your rate of speech and stay on one topic at a time.
- Speak to the person with aphasia and include them in the conversation; value their opinion.
- Allow the person plenty of time to talk without finishing sentences for them and ask the person if they want help filling in a word. Avoid correcting their speech.
- Maintain a natural conversational manner and volume appropriate for an adult.
- Use supportive conversation tools like writing words or drawing; give written choices; demonstrate/show or gesture.

Additional Reminders

- A person with aphasia can continue to get better for years to come with continued effort and conversation practice.
- Encourage a person with aphasia to stay socially active with family and your community; all speaking practice is helpful.