

Learning About Aphasia



What is aphasia?

Aphasia (say "a-FAY-zha") is the loss of communication skills. Aphasia may affect how well a person can speak, read, write, and understand language.

Some people may not be able to read, write, or express their thoughts in words. Or they may not understand written or spoken words.

The most common cause of aphasia is a stroke. A stroke can damage the left side of the brain. This is the side of the brain that handles language.

When a person has a problem speaking or writing, it's called nonfluent or expressive aphasia. When a person can't understand written or spoken words, it's called fluent or receptive aphasia.

How can you manage aphasia?

Sometimes, other parts of the brain take over for the damaged parts. Many people get back some of their skills. But some people have lasting problems.

A speech-language pathologist can help some people relearn lost skills.

Getting support

It's common to feel sad and hopeless when you have aphasia. It's important to let caregivers know about these feelings. It's also important to get treatment for depression if needed.

Support from family and friends can be helpful. They can help with daily tasks and treatment.

The American Stroke Association may offer local support groups. You can also find resources and information at the National Aphasia Association and the National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders.

What can caregivers do?

Here are some ways caregivers can help:

- Support and encourage your loved one to take part in a rehab program.
- Visit and talk with your loved one often.
- Take part in education programs, and attend rehab sessions.
- Help your loved one learn and practice new skills.

Communication problems can be very frustrating. Be patient, understanding, and supportive. Here are some tips:

- Speak directly to your loved one. Keep eye contact.
- Speak slowly and simply. Use your normal tone and volume.
- Give your loved one enough time to answer.
- Focus on what the person is saying. Don't focus on how they are saying it.
- Don't fill in words unless you are asked.
- Limit background and other noise like screens and music.
- Ask the person to repeat something if you do not understand. Or make sure you understand what they said by asking them "yes" or "no" questions.
- Use drawing, hand gestures, facial expressions, and writing to help communicate.

Follow-up care is a key part of your treatment and safety. Be sure to make and go to all appointments, and call your doctor if you are having problems. It's also a good idea to know your test results and keep a list of the medicines you take.

©2006-2022 Healthwise, Incorporated.

This care instruction is for use with your licensed healthcare professional. If you have questions about a medical condition or this instruction, always ask your healthcare professional. Healthwise, Incorporated disclaims any warranty or liability for your use of this information.