



Communication After Stroke: Aphasia

Communication problems are common after a stroke. Aphasia is a common communication impairment. It can affect a person's ability to speak, read, write, and understand what others say.

What you should know

- ✓ 1 in 3 people who have had a stroke will have aphasia
- ✓ Aphasia impacts a person's ability to use language. It does NOT impact their intelligence. They may know more than they can say
- ✓ Communicating with someone with aphasia can take time and effort for both you and the person with aphasia. It gets easier with practice
- ✓ Aphasia can lead to frustration, social isolation and depression
- ✓ Better communication can improve care and quality of life for the person with aphasia
- ✓ A person may have one or both of the following types of aphasia:

Receptive Aphasia - trouble taking messages IN; difficulty understanding what is heard or read

Expressive Aphasia - trouble getting messages OUT; difficulty speaking or writing

Smart Tips - Always follow the care plan!

Before You Start



- Ensure adequate lighting
- Reduce noise and distractions
- Ensure the person's hearing aids and glasses and/or dentures are in place if needed
- Position yourself face to face and at eye level with the person
- Plan extra time for your interaction and be patient

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Keep it Simple



- Make sure you both know the topic and be very clear when the topic changes
- Speak in short simple sentences
- Ask YES/NO questions
- Offer choice: “Do you want A or B, or neither?”

Be Respectful



- Speak slowly and clearly in a normal tone and volume
- Acknowledge competence “I know you know”
- Include the person with aphasia in conversations - do not speak for them
- Avoid interrupting, allow them time to finish their sentence

Encourage Communication



- Use gestures
- Write down key words during your interaction
- Have them point to words or pictures; use a communication board

Confirm the Message



- Repeat what you think the person said to verify what you understood
- Pay attention to body language and facial expressions
- Acknowledge frustration, it's okay to admit that you don't understand
- Offer to try again later

Seek extra support

- ✓ Speech Language Pathologists are the experts in communication. It may be helpful to involve them in the person's care
- ✓ For more information about Aphasia, please visit the Aphasia Institute <https://www.aphasia.ca/>