

Speech Therapy

Contact an SLP (Speech-Language Pathologist) for an assessment or consultation. The SLP will evaluate the nature and severity of a person's aphasia.

Treatment, if recommended, may include:

- Exercises designed to improve language ability
- Teaching of strategies to compensate for lost ability
- Group sessions to promote social interaction and skills
- Caregiver or family training and/or counseling
- If needed, alternative means of communication can be introduced to supplement speech (e.g. gestures, word or picture boards, computerized devices)

Aphasia is a common symptom of stroke and may improve quickly in the early days of recovery. However, aphasia is also a chronic condition that may persist.

For more information

Contact your local hospital or health unit to learn about Speech Pathology services in your area.

Websites

For information about Speech-Language Pathology, as well as communication impairments, including aphasia:

- Speech-Language & Audiology Canada: sac-oac.ca
- American Speech-Language- Hearing Association: asha.org

For information and support for aphasia:

- National Aphasia Assoc. aphasia.org
- Aphasia Hope Foundation aphasiahope.org

For information about stroke and local stroke support groups:

- Heart & Stroke Foundation heartandstroke.ca
- Stroke Recovery Association of BC strokerecoverybc.ca

For information about Speech- Language Pathology in British Columbia or to find a private therapist: www.sac-oac.ca/public

www.fraserhealth.ca

This information does not replace the advice given to you by your healthcare provider.

Catalogue #255852 (August 2016)
To order: patienteduc@fraserhealth.ca

Aphasia

Speech-Language Pathology

About Loss of Language



 **fraserhealth**

What is 'aphasia'?

(say *ah-fay-zee-ah*)

Aphasia (or dysphasia) is a breakdown in normal language function. Aphasia is caused by damage to the brain from stroke, head injury, brain tumour, or neurological disease.

Aphasia can affect a person's ability to:

- understand what is said (auditory comprehension)
- say the right words (verbal expression)
- read or write
- use gestures or draw

Aphasia itself does not affect a person's intelligence. People usually know what they want to say but are unable to get it out. Aphasia can occur in combination with slurred speech (dysarthria), apraxia, or cognitive impairment.

Aphasia varies in severity. It can be mild, with people having some trouble finding words in conversation (anomia), or can be severe, having a devastating impact on all language abilities (global aphasia).

What might it look like?

- **Receptive Aphasia**

(difficulty understanding language)

Can impair a person's ability to:

- follow directions
- answer questions correctly
- understand the meaning of words and sentences
- follow conversation

- **Expressive Aphasia**

(problems with language production)

Can impair a person's ability to:

- repeat
- say "yes" or "no" as intended
- speak with ease at a normal speed
- get out the right words for what they want to say

Many people have a combination of receptive and expressive aphasia.

You may also notice the person:

- getting stuck on the same words or ideas
- using made-up words or the wrong words
- swearing
- having difficulty with numbers or math
- fluctuating, sometimes saying whole phrases clearly

What can you do?

To help the person with aphasia to communicate:

- Limit conversations to one person at a time. Avoid noisy environments and distractions.
- Speak slowly and naturally without raising your voice.
- Use facial expressions, gestures, and pointing to help clarify.
- Use short, simple sentences without 'talking down'.
- Establish the topic first, summarizing what you've understood as you go.
- Repeat or rephrase as needed.
- Ask yes and no questions or give 2 to 3 choices in your question.
- Talk about familiar subjects. Bring in family photos.
- Encourage all efforts to communicate, but admit when you don't understand.
- Offer help to guess what they're saying, but don't require them to say it perfectly or assume you know what they're saying.
- Respect that aphasia can be very frustrating and tiring.
- Give the person plenty of time to express themselves, but agree to return to an idea later if several attempts have been unsuccessful.