



## What is aphasia?

*Aphasia* is an acquired communication disorder that impairs a person's ability to process language, but does not affect intelligence. Aphasia impairs the ability to speak and understand others, and most people with aphasia experience difficulty reading and writing.

## What causes aphasia?

The most common cause of *aphasia* is stroke (about 25-40% of stroke survivors acquire aphasia). It can also result from head injury, brain tumor, migraines or other neurological causes. Aphasia can also result from Frontotemporal Degeneration, Corticobasal Degeneration, and other neurodegenerative disorders. These conditions, which are much less common than aphasia related to strokes and brain injuries, are referred to as "Primary Progressive Aphasia".

## How common is aphasia?

*Aphasia* affects more than one million Americans – or 1 in 250 people – and is more common than Parkinson's disease, cerebral palsy or muscular dystrophy. More than 100,000 Americans acquire the disorder each year. However, most people have never heard of it.

## Who acquires aphasia?

Aphasia can occur in people of all ages, races, nationalities and genders.

## Can a person have aphasia without having a physical disability?

Yes, but many people with *aphasia* also have weakness or paralysis of their right leg and right arm. When a person acquires aphasia it is usually due to damage on the left side of brain, which controls movements on the *right* side of the body.

## Can people who have aphasia return to their jobs?

**Sometimes.** Since most jobs require speech and language skills, aphasia can make some types of work difficult. Individuals with mild or even moderate *aphasia* are sometimes able to return to work, but they may have to change jobs.

## How long does it take to recover from aphasia?

If the symptoms of *aphasia* last longer than two or three months after a stroke, a complete recovery is unlikely. However, it is important to note that some people continue to improve over a period of years and even decades. Improvement is a slow process that usually involves helping both the individual and family understand the nature of aphasia and learning compensatory strategies for communicating.

## How do you communicate with a person with aphasia?

- Give the person with aphasia time to speak and do not finish the person's sentences unless asked.
- Be sensitive to background noise and turn off competing sounds such as radios or TVs when possible.
- Be open to means of communicating other than speech, eg., use drawing, gesturing.
- Confirm that you are communicating successfully.