

What is Aphasia?

By Becky L. Spivey, M.Ed.

Aphasia is a neurological language disorder that impairs a person's ability to use and/or understand words. Impairments may include deficits in the ability to speak, understand speech, read, and/or write—but aphasia does *not* affect one's intelligence.

What Causes Aphasia?

Aphasia may occur after damage to the part of the brain where we organize, store, and produce written and spoken language. Although aphasia is more common among older adults following a stroke, aphasia can occur across all ages, races, nationalities, and genders. *Acquired childhood aphasia* occurs when a child whom has already begun learning language experiences brain trauma.



How Common is Aphasia?

More than 100,000 people each year get aphasia. It affects 1 in 250 people and is more common than cerebral palsy, Parkinson's disease, or muscular dystrophy.

Are There Different Types of Aphasia?

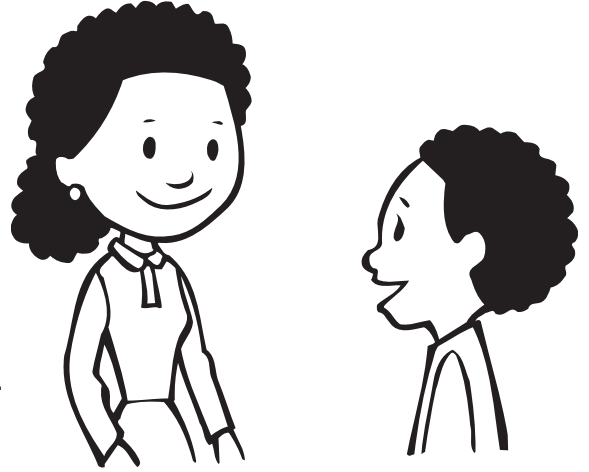
There are many types of aphasia. Some individuals have difficulty speaking; whereas, others may struggle to follow a conversation. Cases may be mild, severe, or anywhere in between. Symptoms may differ greatly, but the bottom line is that all people with aphasia will have some difficulty communicating. The symptoms of aphasia may be temporary or permanent, depending upon the amount of brain damage a child experiences.

What are Some Strategies for a Child or Adult with Aphasia?

- Strengthen remaining language skills
- Find ways to compensate for the skills that are lost
- Improve memory of object names with picture flash cards
- Communicate with others using pictures of objects and other familiar activities
- Practice reading and writing exercises in workbooks
- Learn sign language
- Use computer programs to aid in speech, hearing, reading comprehension, and recall.

What Can I do to Help a Child or Adult with Aphasia?

- Give the person with aphasia time to speak—do not try to finish his/her sentences.
- Turn off background noise when possible (TVs, radios, etc.).
- Use other means of communication (drawing, gesturing, or writing key words).
- Confirm to the person with aphasia that you understand their communication.
- Speak simply and directly—you do not need to shout.
- Limit the use of figurative language.
- Ask yes/no questions whenever possible.
- Avoid using numbers; they are difficult for some aphasia patients to understand.



Children with aphasia and their caregivers need support and guidance. Physicians and hospitals can provide listings of support groups in your local area. The best source of basic information about aphasia for those living with this condition and their families is the *Response Center of the National Aphasia Association (NAA)*. Contact the NAA via the internet: www.aphasia.org or call toll free at 1-800-922-4622.

You may also write to the association:

National Aphasia Association
350 Seventh Avenue, Suite 902
New York, NY 10001

Resources

Aphasia- What Is It? Questions and Answers About Aphasia – National Aphasia Association pamphlet www.aphasia.org
Penn State Children's Hospital- Acquired Childhood Aphasia <http://www.hmc.psu.edu/childrens/healthinfo/a/aphasia.htm>

National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke- <http://www.ninds.nih.gov/disorders/aphasia/aphasia.htm>

National Institute on Deafness and other Communication Disorders- NIDCD <http://www.nidcd.nih.gov/health/voice/aphasia.asp>



Helpful Products

The list of Super Duper® products below will help your child with aphasia. Visit www.superduperinc.com or call 1-800-277-8737. Click the links below to see the product and description.

Webber® Functional Communication

Ask for Item #GB-146 <http://www.superduperinc.com/products/view.aspx?pid=GB146>

Auditory Memory for Quick Stories™

Ask for Item #AMLQ-110 <http://www.superduperinc.com/products/view.aspx?pid=AMLQ110&std=>

Following Directions Fun Deck®

Ask for Item #FD-59 <http://www.superduperinc.com/products/view.aspx?pid=FD59>

“WH” Chipper Chat®

Ask for Item #CC-55 <http://www.superduperinc.com/products/view.aspx?pid=CC55&std=>