

## Understanding Aphasia

Helpful Information for Caregivers



### What is Aphasia?

Aphasia is a language disorder that results from damage to the brain from a stroke. A stroke is a block or a bleed in the brain. It can also come from a traumatic brain injury, brain tumor, or infection that affects the brain. Damage is on the left side of the brain, affecting the right arm, leg, or face. A person may have weaker muscles on the right side.

### Aphasia is not:

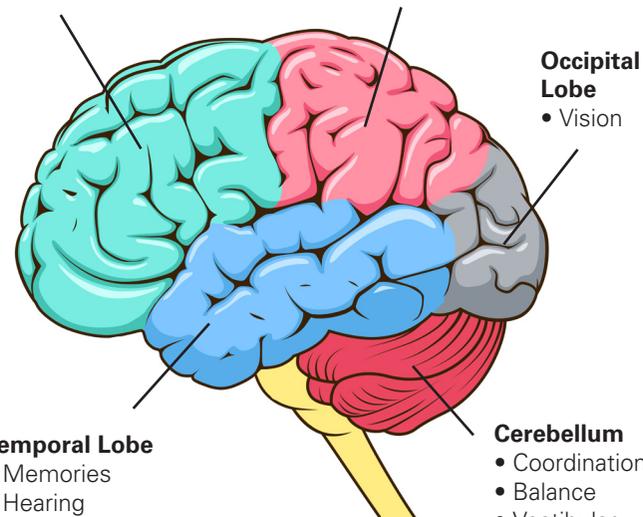
Aphasia is not a memory or intelligence problem. Apraxia (difficulty motor planning) and dysarthria (facial muscle weakness that may impact swallowing and ability to understand speech) can accompany aphasia, but they are not considered aphasia.

#### Frontal Lobe

- Thinking
- Speaking
- Reasoning
- Problem solving

#### Parietal Lobe

- Reading
- Body orientation
- Sensory information
- Understanding language



#### Temporal Lobe

- Memories
- Hearing
- Behavior
- General Emotions

#### Cerebellum

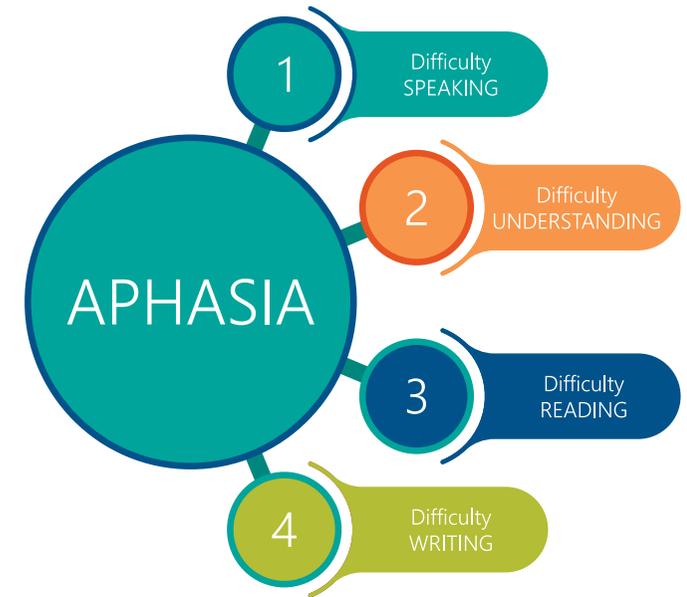
- Coordination
- Balance
- Vestibular
- Attention

#### Brain Stem

- Breathing
- Temperature
- Heart Rate

#### Occipital Lobe

- Vision



### What does Aphasia Look Like?

Aphasia can affect any or all 4 parts of language:

1. Understanding language: an individual with aphasia may have trouble understanding what people say to them. Person may feel like someone is speaking a foreign language
2. Speaking-An individual with aphasia may have trouble saying words or creating words. For example, may say 'apple' when they meant to say 'banana.'
3. Reading-An individual with aphasia may not be able to read words, phrases or sentences, or read and understand information as quickly. May be not be able to read aloud correctly, but can understand
4. Writing-An individual with aphasia may not recognize letters, spell words correctly, or be able to write information in sentences

# “HOPE AFTER A STROKE”

## Who will help my family member/friend?

A care team for the person with aphasia may consist of: physician, nursing, speech and language therapist, occupational therapist, physical therapist, art therapist, music therapist, recreational therapist, psychologist, respiratory therapist, case manager, social workers, and patient resources

## What does the future hold?

It is important to follow the recommendations of your family member's medical team to maximize their continued recovery. Just as each individual is different, each person with aphasia's recovery is different. If you have any questions about the time frame of your loved one's recovery process, feel free to direct them to one of the team members listed above

## How can I help?

To communicate with the person with aphasia the following suggestions are:

- 1) Make sure the individual has any assistive aids available (glasses, hearing aids, etc)
- 2) Keep the surroundings as quiet as possible to allow your family member to focus.
- 3) Be sure to be in the individual's view, so they can see facial expressions, gestures, other non-verbal communication
- 4) Give the patient with aphasia enough time to get their words out. Try not to interrupt or fill in the blanks
- 5) If you know the word they are trying to think of, you can give them a clue. If they are trying to say "apple", the family can say, "It's a fruit, it begins with "a", etc.
- 6) You may want to ask yes or no questions to aid in their understanding of what you are saying
- 7) Use clear, short sentences to help the person with aphasia understand.
- 8) Use demonstration as needed when provided directions so that the individual can mirror you
- 9) Have pictures available for the individual to point to if they are having difficulties expressing themselves
- 10) Write information down as single words if patient is able to read

## Resources

For further information and support please refer to the following sites:

National Aphasia Association:  
[www.aphasia.org/](http://www.aphasia.org/)

Australia Aphasia Association:  
<https://aphasia.org.au/>

Ohio State University Aphasia Initiative:  
<https://sphs.osu.edu/clinic/aphasia>

[https://www.facebook.com/  
ClevelandStroke Club](https://www.facebook.com/ClevelandStrokeClub)

<https://www.chsc.org/>

National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders:  
<https://nidcd.nih.gov>

**“The human spirit is  
STRONGER  
than anything that can  
happen to it.”**

-C.C. Scott

