

## ***When You Are With a Person with Aphasia***

- Be patient – give the person extra time.
- Speak clearly and slowly. Do not shout.
- Use short, simple sentences.
- Try to minimize background noise.
- Encourage and use all kinds of communication (simple gestures, facial expressions, writing and drawing).

### ***Quotes From Persons with Aphasia***

*“Aphasia screws up messages inside the brain. What starts out to be a clear piece of brain data gets ‘out there’ as gibberish, incorrect statements, or silence.”*

*“I know what to talk – can’t express.”*

*“Thinking is easy, it’s getting it from the brain to the mouth.”*

*“Speech, **Frustrating.**”*

*“Aphasia – in here [brain], can’t get out.”*

Source:

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# APHASIA

(uh fay’ zhuh)

***...when your  
brain holds  
your words  
HOSTAGE***



CARITAS HEALTH GROUP

Community Health Services  
Speech and Language Services



Capital  
Health

# Aphasia (uh fay' zhuh)

## ***What Aphasia IS***

Aphasia is a communication disorder caused by brain damage. Stroke (brain attack) is the most common cause of aphasia.

Aphasia affects the ability to use language. While intelligence remains intact, people with aphasia may have difficulty:

- speaking
- reading
- writing
- understanding speech

The symptoms of aphasia may be mild or severe. Some people with aphasia speak very easily with occasional word-finding difficulties, while others struggle to produce a sound.

## ***What Aphasia ISN'T***

People with aphasia may have difficulty speaking or understanding, but that doesn't mean they are:

- drunk
- deaf
- mentally challenged
- suffering from dementia (e.g., Alzheimer's disease)

## ***Who Can Have Aphasia?***

Aphasia can happen to people of any age, sex, race, or nationality. It is not related to education and type of work.

## ***Can Aphasia Be Prevented?***

There are no definite steps that can be taken to prevent the onset of aphasia once a stroke or head trauma has occurred.

The location and size of the area damaged in the brain determines the type and severity of aphasia.

## ***Can Aphasia Be Cured?***

So far, there are no drugs or surgery known to cure aphasia. Speech and language therapy is provided to people with aphasia:

- to help them use their remaining language abilities
- to teach them ways to overcome their communication problems

## ***Problems That Can***

## ***Accompany Aphasia***

The brain damage that causes aphasia can also cause:

- weakness in the muscles of:
  - speech (dysarthria)
  - swallowing (dysphagia)
  - one side of the body (hemiparesis or hemiparalysis)
- difficulty carrying out purposeful speech and/or body movements (apraxia)
- blindness for parts of a field of vision (hemianopsia)

## ***Personal Impacts of Aphasia***

Aphasia is a heartbreaking and devastating disability. When speech is impaired or absent, the impact on a person and their family can be profound. They may experience:

- depression and anxiety
- denial
- stress and fatigue
- frustration and irritability

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*Of the 5500 Albertans who suffer a stroke each year, an estimated 20%, or 1100 people, will have some type of aphasia.*

*There are about twice as many people with aphasia as there are with Parkinson's disease.*