

APHASIA (SPEECH LANGUAGE PATHOLOGY)

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Aphasia (Speech Language Pathology)

What is aphasia?

Aphasia, sometimes called 'dysphasia', is a language disorder resulting from damage to parts of the brain that generate language, typically in the left half of the brain. It can affect speaking, understanding spoken or written words, as well as dealing with numbers. These areas may be affected in different ways and levels of severity. A speech language pathologist (SLP) can assist with diagnosis and treatment of aphasia.

What are the signs of aphasia?

- Difficulties understanding words, questions and objects.
- Yes and no responses may not always be correct, and may vary from day to day.
- May only say a few words, or have no speech whatsoever.
- May get stuck on certain words and repeat them.
- Difficulties putting words together to form sentences.
- Struggle to find the right word or the wrong word may come out.

What should I do if I have aphasia?

- Be patient and get the other person's attention before you start speaking.
- Avoid speaking in long sentences if this is difficult, and emphasize on keywords.

- Stay calm. If you are struggling to get a word out, it's okay to take a break from speaking and come back to it later. Take your time while speaking.
- If you are struggling to get words out, try to describe it (e.g. a comb is something that we use for our hair).
- Communicate with drawings, gestures, writing and facial expressions.
- Minimize distractions such as a loud radio or TV, whenever possible.

How can I help someone who has aphasia?

- Make sure you have the person's full attention before you start speaking.
- Keep your communications short and simple. Try to speak slowly.
- Ask questions that require a yes or no response (e.g. would you like a cup of coffee?).
- Maintain eye contact and watch the person's body language and use of gestures.
- Avoid correcting the person's speech and give them time to finish their sentences.
- Do not pretend that you understand what the person is trying to say. Clarify what understand and agree to come back to confusing topics at a later time.
- Encourage the use of all relevant communication strategies. The use of objects and pictures may help support the conversation.

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