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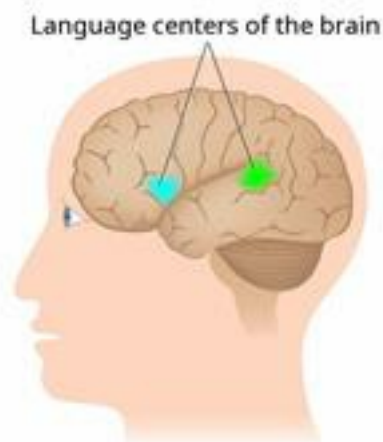
Patient Education:

Aphasia

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Aphasia is a language disorder. It affects the part of the brain that is used to communicate. Aphasia does not affect intelligence, but a person may have trouble:

- Speaking.
- Understanding speech.
- Reading.
- Writing.

Some people with aphasia may also have trouble with memory or attention. Aphasia can happen to anyone at any age. It is most common in older adults.

What are the causes?

This condition is caused by damage to the language centers of the brain. Damage may be caused by:

- Stroke. This causes reduced blood flow to certain areas of the brain. Stroke is the most common cause of aphasia.

- Traumatic brain injury (TBI).
- Brain tumor.
- Infection of the brain tissues.
- Nervous system disease that gradually gets worse, such as dementia or multiple sclerosis (MS). This is called progressive neurological disorder.
- Brain surgery.

What are the signs or symptoms?

Symptoms of this condition include:

- Trouble finding the right words or expressing thoughts and needs through speech.
- Using the wrong words, nonsense words, or jargon.
- Talking in sentences that do not make sense or that are not grammatically correct.
- Being unable to repeat back words and phrases.
- Difficulty expressing ideas through writing or not understanding what you are reading.
- Being unable to understand other people's speech.
- Having trouble understanding numbers.

The condition affects people differently. Symptoms may start suddenly or come on gradually, depending on the underlying cause.

How is this diagnosed?

This condition may be diagnosed based on a screening of your ability to communicate as soon as symptoms start, or when you are medically stable after a stroke or brain injury. Later, a more comprehensive assessment may be done in the hospital or at a rehabilitation center. The assessment may test your ability to:

- Use speech to communicate your needs.
- Use muscles in your mouth and throat for speaking and swallowing.
- Express ideas with speech or other means of communication, such as hand gestures.
- Make conversation with others across a variety of topics.
- Hear and understand speech.
- Understand and produce written material.
- Manage memory and attention associated with communication.

How is this treated?

Treatment for this condition depends on your needs and abilities. The goal is to help restore your ability to communicate or find ways to manage communication challenges. Common treatments include:

- Speech–language therapy. Part of this may include:
 - Rebuilding intonation, sentence structure, and vocabulary.
 - Learning other ways to communicate, such as using word books, communication boards, or special software programs.
 - Learning to communicate with writing, sign language, or hand gestures.
- Working with family members. This may include:
 - Learning ways to communicate.
 - Emotional support.
- Occupational therapy. This can help to find devices to assist with daily living.

Treatment usually begins as soon as possible. It may begin while you are in the hospital and continue in a rehabilitation center or at home. In some cases, aphasia may improve quickly on

its own. In other cases, recovery occurs more slowly over time.

Follow these instructions at home:



- Make sure you have a good support system at home.
- Find a support group. This can help you connect with others who are going through the same thing.
- Try the following tips while communicating:
 - Use short, simple sentences. Ask family members to do the same. Sentences that require one-word or short answers are easiest.
 - Avoid distractions like background noise when trying to listen or talk.
 - Try communicating with gestures, pointing, writing, or drawing.
 - Talk slowly. Ask family members to talk to you slowly.
 - Maintain eye contact when communicating. Ask family members to do the same when communicating with you.
 - Ask family members to give you time to respond or to engage in conversation with them.
- Keep all follow-up visits. This is important.

Where to find support

- National Aphasia Association: www.aphasia.org

Contact a health care provider if:

- Your symptoms change or get worse.
- You are struggling with anxiety or depression.

Get help right away if you have:

- Any symptoms of a stroke. "**BE FAST**" is an easy way to remember the main warning signs of a stroke:
 - **B - Balance.** Signs are dizziness, sudden trouble walking, or loss of balance.
 - **E - Eyes.** Signs are trouble seeing or a sudden change in vision.
 - **F - Face.** Signs are sudden weakness or numbness of the face, or the face or eyelid drooping on one side.
 - **A - Arms.** Signs are weakness or numbness in an arm. This happens suddenly and usually on one side of the body.
 - **S - Speech.** Signs are sudden trouble speaking, slurred speech, or trouble understanding what people say.
 - **T - Time.** Time to call emergency services. Write down what time symptoms started.
- Other signs of a stroke, such as:
 - A sudden, severe headache with no known cause.
 - Nausea or vomiting.
 - Seizure.

These symptoms may represent a serious problem that is an emergency. Do not

wait to see if the symptoms will go away. Get medical help right away. Call your local emergency services (911 in the U.S.). Do not drive yourself to the hospital.

Summary

- Aphasia is a language disorder. It may cause difficulty with speech, writing, reading, or understanding others.
- In some cases, aphasia may improve quickly on its own. In other cases, recovery occurs more slowly over time.
- Get help right away if you have symptoms of a stroke.

This information is not intended to replace advice given to you by your health care provider. Make sure you discuss any questions you have with your health care provider.