



ASHA /

# Adult Aphasia



## What is aphasia?

- Aphasia is a language disorder.
- It can cause problems with
  - Understanding
  - Speaking
  - Reading
  - Writing
- Thinking (cognitive) skills are usually good.

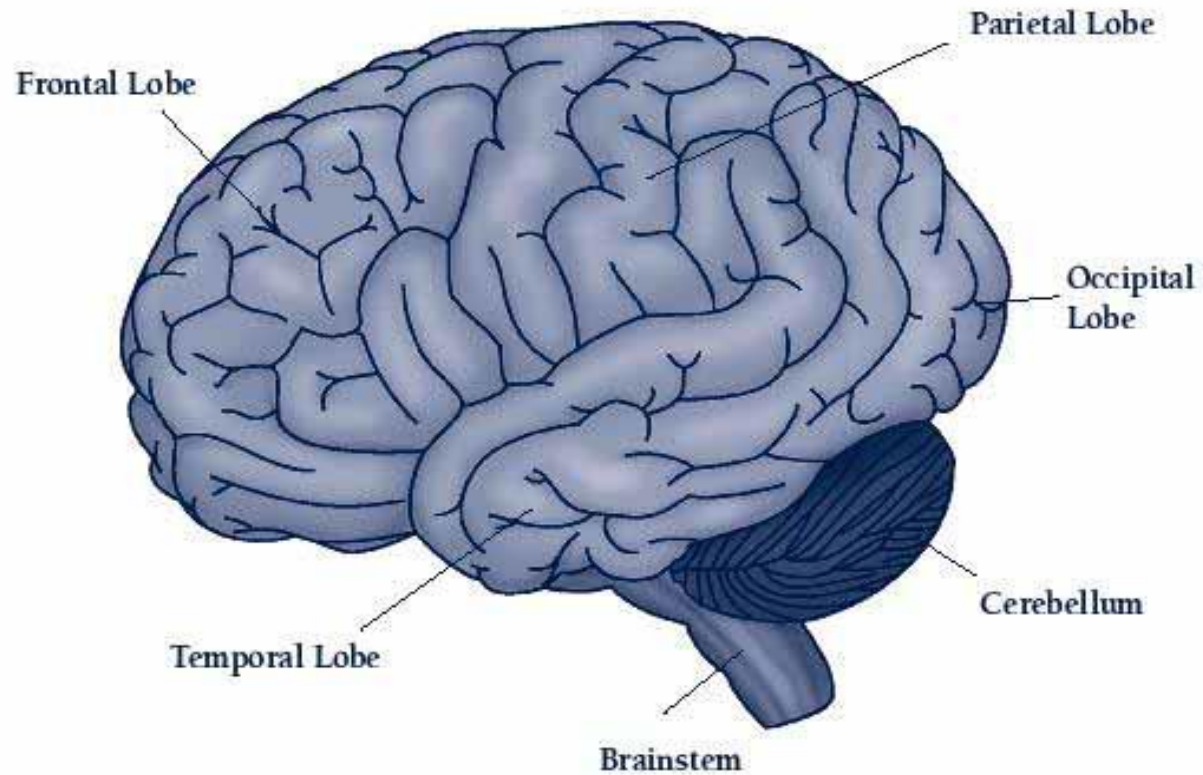


## What causes aphasia?

- Aphasia is caused by brain damage from stroke or head injury.
- Damage is usually to the left side of the brain.
- This is where language centers are located in most people.



# Diagram of the Brain





## What are the types of aphasia?

- Everyone with aphasia will have different skills and different problems.
- Problems will depend on the type of brain injury and how severe it is.
- The general types are
  - expressive aphasia
  - receptive aphasia
  - global aphasia



## What is expressive aphasia?

- People with expressive aphasia have trouble speaking and writing. They may
  - only be able to say one or two words at a time
  - have trouble thinking of the words they want to say
  - leave words out of sentences
  - have problems spelling words
  - have trouble putting together sentences that make sense



## What is receptive aphasia?

- People with receptive aphasia have trouble understanding and reading. They may
  - Be able to follow only simple directions
  - Have trouble following conversation
  - Need to have information repeated
  - Need visual or touch cues to help them understand
  - Have trouble understanding what they read
  - Say words that don't make sense but not know that others can't understand them



## What is global aphasia?

- Global aphasia is the most severed type of aphasia
- People with global aphasia have a lot of trouble with speaking, writing, understanding, and reading.
- Their skills may vary
  - They may be better at understanding than at speaking





## More about aphasia...

- Most people with aphasia will have some
  - Trouble with speaking, writing, understanding, and/or reading.
- The types of problems will be very different for each person



## How is aphasia different from other speech problems?

- When we communicate, we use both speech and language.
  - Speech is how we say sounds and put them together into words.
  - Language is the words we use and understand
- Stroke and brain injury can cause speech problems, including
  - dysarthria
  - apraxia



## What is dysarthria?

- Dysarthria
  - Is caused by muscle weakness or tightness
  - May cause people to
    - Slur their words
    - Not be able to speak loudly
    - Sound like they are talking out of their nose (nasality)



## What is apraxia?

- Apraxia
  - Is caused by problems getting speech muscles to do what the brain wants them to do
  - May cause people to
    - Mix up sounds in words
    - Say the wrong sounds
    - Say words and sounds differently every time they try to say them
    - Struggle to say sounds



## What else do I need to know about aphasia?

- People with aphasia can also have dysarthria or apraxia
- It can be hard to know if aphasia, dysarthria, or apraxia are causing the most problems.
- A person's skills may improve as the brain heals
  - It may take days or months
  - Improvement soon after the stroke is called spontaneous recovery



## Can a person with aphasia have other problems, too?

- A person who has had a stroke or brain injury may have
  - Weakness or numbness on one side of the body
  - Trouble seeing
  - Problems remembering things
  - Trouble solving problems or thinking clearly
  - Problems chewing and swallowing food and drink, called dysphagia



## What if a person speaks more than one language?

- If a person learned two languages at the same time
  - Both languages are most likely located in the same part of the brain
  - They will probably have trouble in both languages



## What if a person speaks more than one language? (continued)

- If a person learned one language before the second
  - The languages may be located in different parts of the brain
  - They may have trouble in only one language, or in both





## What help is available for a person with aphasia?

- A speech-language pathologist, or SLP, is trained to work with people who have speech and language problems like aphasia.
- SLPs work in hospitals, rehabilitation, nursing homes, clinics, and private practice, and may go to a person's home.



## What help is available for a person with aphasia? (continued)

- Support groups and stroke clubs may be available
  - People with aphasia can meet and learn from each other
  - Spouses and other caregivers can get support, too.



## How does an SLP help?

- SLPs can
  - Test people to see what they do well and what is hard to do
  - Work with the person on the problems he or she is having
  - Teach the person with aphasia and his or her family ways to communicate more easily
  - Help find other ways to communicate (called augmentative and alternative communication, or AAC) if the person can't talk



## What resources are available?

- For more information about aphasia and other speech, language, and swallowing disorders, go to ASHA's Web site, [www.asha.org/public/](http://www.asha.org/public/).
- Other organizations include
  - American Stroke Association  
[www.strokeassociation.org](http://www.strokeassociation.org)
  - Aphasia Hope Foundation  
[www.aphasiahope.org](http://www.aphasiahope.org)
  - National Aphasia Association  
[www.aphasia.org](http://www.aphasia.org)