

## Different Types of Aphasia

Categorizing different types of aphasia can be complicated. Aphasia may be classified based on the location of the brain lesion or the patterns of language difficulties, each with varying degrees of influence on an individual's language skills. To understand the type of aphasia your loved one may be facing, visit your speech-language pathologist (SLP) or neurologist. It is important to keep in mind that a person's initial presenting symptoms can change with recovery, and, therefore, the classification of the aphasia may also change.

### Mild to Severe Aphasia

The severity of aphasia depends on the degree and location of damage to the brain. The greater the severity of the aphasia, the more limited the speech and language skills can be. Here is what to expect with mild to severe aphasia:

#### Mild aphasia

- Individuals may have trouble understanding long messages.
- Individuals may need a little extra time to understand and respond to spoken messages.
- Individuals may have difficulty finding words to express or explain an idea.
- Individuals may put words in the wrong order or substitute the wrong word/part of a word when talking, for example, calling a “table” a “cup.”
- Individuals may have difficulty responding to questions when they are put on the spot.
- Individuals may be able to participate in basic conversations in various settings.

#### Severe Aphasia

- Individuals may have trouble understanding spoken utterances.
- Individuals may be unreliable in responding to “yes/no” questions.
- Individuals may not be aware of their own errors.
- Individuals may use made-up/nonsense words, or a combination of words and jargon, that are not understood by the listener and/or communication partner.

### Improvement Is Possible

There are many different options for treatment of people with aphasia. Science has been instrumental in researching and providing evidence that people with aphasia can continue to make significant gains several years after

their stroke, surprising researchers and giving hope to the hundreds of thousands of stroke and brain-injury survivors.

### Practice, Practice, Practice

Improvement starts with a great SLP. In the United States more than 16,000 SLPs treat adults with speech disorders, including aphasia. These professionals understand the challenges of trying to understand someone with a language disorder, and they can provide functional tips and techniques for caregivers on how best to communicate with their loved one. Learning these new ways to facilitate functional communication from an SLP will help your loved one begin to face life with aphasia.

Additionally, tools like mobile device apps, communication devices, online speech therapy, and support groups can help your loved one strengthen his/her communication skills and regain confidence. They can also help your loved one find meaningful and helpful ways to share his/her wants and needs, personal information, and safety information, which includes information about pain or symptoms of illness.

Regardless of the approach you select to improve your loved one's communication skills and decrease communication frustrations, **remember that there is hope. Individuals with aphasia can improve.**