

# Let's Talk About Stroke and Aphasia

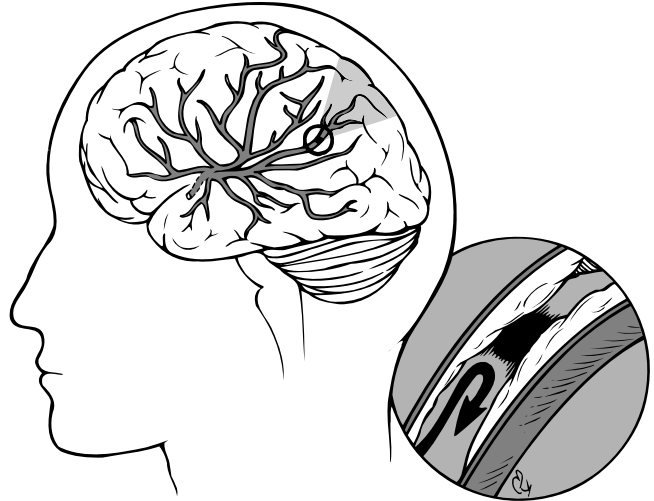
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## What is aphasia?

Aphasia (ah-FA-ze-ah) is a language disorder that affects the ability to communicate. It's most often caused by a stroke that affects the left part of the brain, which controls the speech and language center of the brain. (See figure.)

Aphasia does not affect intelligence. Stroke survivors remain mentally alert, even though their speech may be jumbled, fragmented or impossible to understand. Some survivors continue to have:

- Trouble speaking, like “getting the words out”
- Trouble finding words
- Problems understanding what others say
- Problems with reading, writing or math
- Inability to process long words and infrequently used words



*Blocked artery in the brain prevents blood flow.*

*When you have a clot in a blood vessel in your brain, you can have a stroke. If the stroke affects the part of your brain that knows speech and language (the left side of the brain in most people), you could have aphasia.*

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## How does it feel to have aphasia?

People with aphasia are often frustrated and confused because they can't speak as well or understand things the way they did before their stroke. They may act differently because of changes in their brain. Imagine looking at the headlines of the morning newspaper and not being able to recognize

the words or trying to say “put the car in the garage” and it comes out “put the train in the house” or “widdle tee car ung sender plissen.” Thousands of alert, intelligent men and women are suddenly plunged into a world of jumbled communication because of aphasia.

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## Are there different types of aphasia?

Yes, there are several forms of aphasia. They include:

- Global aphasia — People with this type of aphasia may be completely unable to speak, name objects, repeat phrases or follow commands.
- Broca's aphasia — The person knows what they want to say, but can't find the right words (can't get the words out).
- Wernicke's aphasia — A person with this aphasia can seldom understand what's being said or control what they're saying.

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## How can family and friends help?

The stroke survivor with aphasia and family members will need the help and support of a doctor, counselor and speech pathologist. It's a good idea for family and friends to:

- Be open about the problem so people can understand.
- Always assume that the stroke survivor can hear. Check understanding with yes/no questions.
- Set up a daily routine for the person with aphasia that includes rest and time to practice skills.
- Use sentences that are short and to the point.
- Keep the noise level down and stand where the survivor can see you.
- Remember to treat the stroke survivor as an adult and let him or her share in decision-making. No one likes to be ignored. Include the survivor in your conversation.
- Help the stroke survivor cope with feelings of frustration and depression.
- Be patient with the person with aphasia. Give them the time they need to try to speak and get their point across to you. This respects their dignity.

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## How can I learn more?

- Talk to your doctor, nurse or other healthcare professionals. Ask about other stroke topics. This is one of many *Let's Talk About Stroke* fact sheets.
- For more information about stroke, or to get more fact sheets, call the American Stroke Association at 1-888-4-STROKE (1-888-478-7653) or visit us online at [StrokeAssociation.org](http://StrokeAssociation.org).
- If you or someone you know has had a stroke, call the American

Stroke Association's "Warmline" at 1-888-4-STROKE (1-888-478-7653), and:

- ✓ Speak with other stroke survivors and caregivers trained to answer your questions and offer support
- ✓ Get information on stroke support groups in your area
- ✓ Sign up to get *Stroke Connection*, a free magazine for stroke survivors and caregivers

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## Do you have questions for your doctor or nurse?

Take a few minutes to write your own questions for the next time you see your healthcare provider:

How long will I need therapy?  
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How can I find a stroke or aphasia support group?  
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Will my aphasia go away?  
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