

STROKE AWARENESS MONTH

Post-Stroke Communication

Aphasia is a communication impairment that impacts identity and relationships because of difficulties speaking, understanding, reading, and writing. It does not affect one's intelligence, capacity, competence, or ability to make decisions. Aphasia is one of the most disabling neurological conditions and can significantly impact quality of life, mood, and ability to engage in meaningful activities. Aphasia occurs in 15–40% of individuals with left hemisphere stroke and persists in 12.5–50% of these stroke survivors. Lesion size, initial aphasia severity, and age have been found to be the main predictors of total recovery.

Three main types of aphasia:

1. Non-fluent aphasia (Broca's)

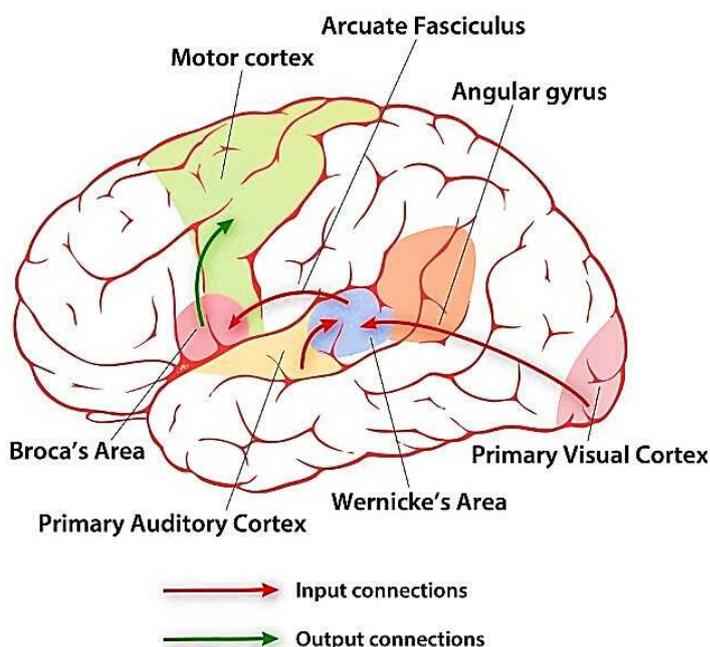
- Decreased verbal output (halting, laboured)
- Often characterized by word finding difficulty

2. Fluent aphasia (Wernicke's)

- Fluid and easy verbal output, but will include unrecognizable, incorrect, or unnecessary words (e.g. jargon)
- Impaired comprehension

3. Global aphasia

- Significant impairments across all aspects of language (e.g. difficulty getting the message in and out)



What can I do to make a difference?

- Turn on lights, provide hearing aids and/or glasses, speak face-to-face
- Ask closed ended questions
- Try to find out how the patient shows yes/no
- Acknowledge the patient's intelligence
- Use gestures, pointing, facial expressions, etc.
- Write key/important words on paper
- Use pictures (premade or drawn)

For more resources:

<https://www.aphasia.ca/>

Dysarthria is a motor speech disorder which is common post-stroke due to paralysis of muscles necessary for speech production. It is the loss of ability to articulate words normally and is typically characterized by slurred speech. Although dysarthria and aphasia both make communication difficult they are very different – **dysarthria is a speech production impairment whereas aphasia is a language impairment.**

References

1. Johnson, Lisa, et al. "Progression of Aphasia Severity in the Chronic Stages of Stroke." *American Journal of Speech-Language Pathology*, vol. 28, no. 2, 2019, pp. 639–649., doi:10.1044/2018_ajslp-18-0123.
2. Kagan, Aura, and Nina Simmons-Mackie. "Changing the Aphasia Narrative." *The ASHA Leader*, vol. 18, no. 11, 2013, pp. 6–8., doi:10.1044/leader.fmp.18112013.6.
3. Martins, I. P., et al. "Language Improvement One Week after Thrombolysis in Acute Stroke." *Acta Neurologica Scandinavica*, vol. 135, no. 3, 2016, pp. 339–345., doi:10.1111/ane.12604.