

Hints from the Heart



Comprehension of Aphasia

June is National Aphasia Awareness Month. Aphasia is a disorder caused by damage to the parts of the brain that control language. It can make it hard for you to read, write and say what you mean to say and is most common in adults who have had a stroke. Aphasia can also be caused by brain tumors, infections, injuries or dementia. There are four main types of Aphasia:

Expressive- *knowing what to say, but have trouble saying or writing what you mean.*

Receptive- *hearing the voice or seeing print, but you can't make sense of the words.*

Anomic- *having trouble using the correct word for objects, places or events.*

Global- *you can't speak, understand speech, read or write.*

In some cases, a person will completely recover from aphasia without treatment which usually occurs following a type of stroke in which blood flow to the brain is temporarily interrupted but quickly restored. In these circumstances, language abilities may return in a few hours or a few days. For most cases, however, language recovery is not as quick. Many people experience spontaneous recovery, in which some language abilities return a few days to a month after the brain injury, but some amount of aphasia typically remains. In these instances, speech-language therapy is often helpful. Recovery usually continues over a two-year period.

Family members and friends can use the following tips when communicating with a person with aphasia:

- Simplify your sentences and slow down your pace
- Keep conversations one-on-one to start with
- Allow the person time to talk
- Don't finish sentences or correct errors
- Reduce distracting noise in the environment
- Keep paper and pencils or pens readily available
- Write a key word or a short sentence to help explain something
- Use drawings or gestures when you aren't understood
- Involve the person with aphasia in conversations as much as possible
- Check for comprehension or summarize what you've discussed
- Attend support group for the person with aphasia and family



For more information, go to www.nidcd.nih.gov KEYWORD: Aphasia.

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