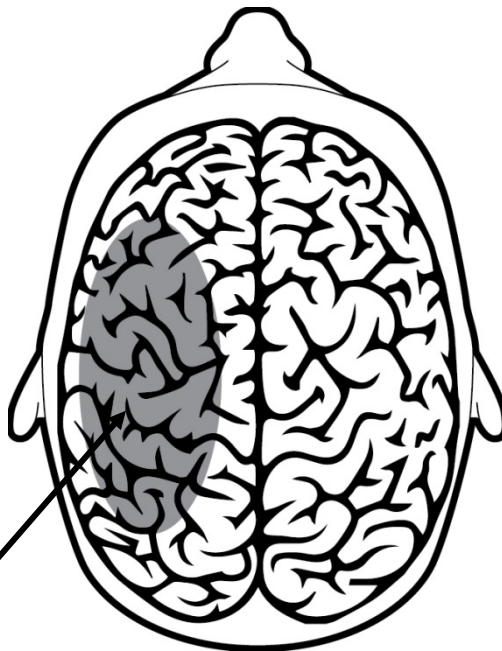


Learning about Aphasia: Speaking

Speech after Stroke

A stroke is damage to part of the brain. It happens when a blood vessel in the brain gets blocked or when it bursts.

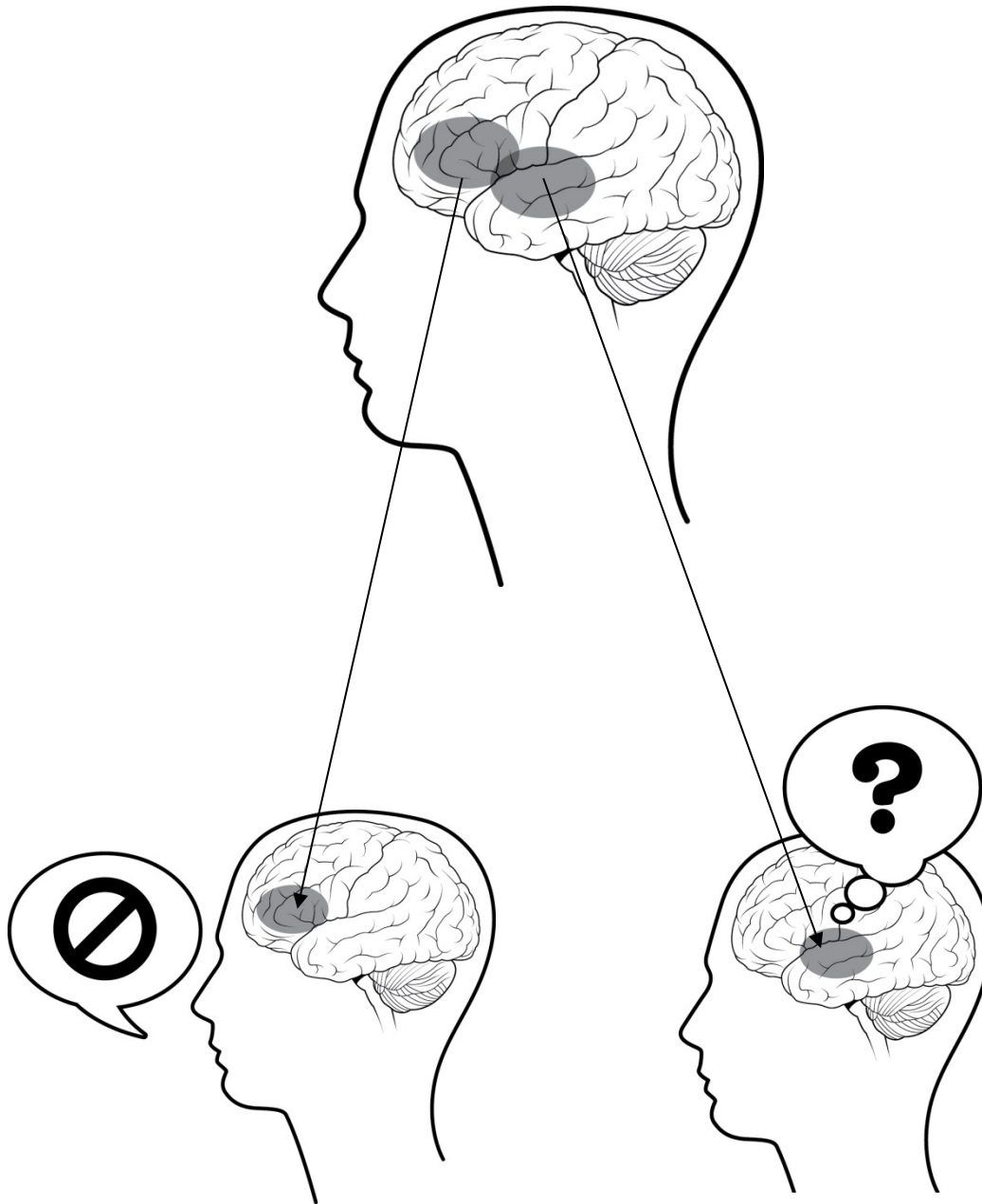
A stroke can cause many different problems, depending on the part and amount of the brain that is damaged.



Part of the brain
that is damaged

One effect on speech is called aphasia. The word “aphasia” is like the word “stroke” – it can mean many different things.

Aphasia can affect a person’s speaking and understanding.



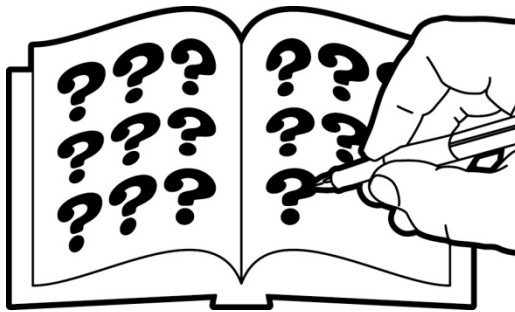
Difficulty speaking

Difficulty understanding

Aphasia can also affect a person's reading or writing.



Reading



Writing

This handout explains a stroke's effect on speaking.

Some people have severe aphasia and can hardly speak a word. Other people have very mild aphasia and you may hardly notice that anything is wrong.

The person may tell you that they cannot "remember" friends' names or that the exact word they are looking for will not come to mind. It is sort of like always having the word "on the tip of your tongue."

A word may come out wrong even though the person is thinking of the right word. Sometimes the word is close to the one they want, like saying "shoe" instead of "sock", or "chore" instead of "chair". Other times the word is completely unrelated, like saying "foot" instead of "window", or saying a made up word like "kerchump" instead of "supper".

People with aphasia know what they want to say, but their stroke has made it hard for their brain to "translate" thoughts into words and sentences.

The person has not lost his/her intelligence – people with aphasia are competent adults who know more than they can say.

So what can you do to help?

The best thing to do is to speak with the person who has had the stroke as well as to his/her Speech-Language Pathologist. They will be able to give you specific ideas about how you can help.

Here are some suggestions to keep in mind when speaking with a person with aphasia:

- ✓ Encourage the person with aphasia to participate in conversations whenever possible, instead of withdrawing from them. The more welcome he/she feels, the more likely he/she will be to try talking.
- ✓ Stay relaxed and allow the person enough time to speak
 - the aphasia will get worse if the person is rushed or excited.
- ✓ Encourage the person to use different ways of “speaking”
 - like pointing, gesturing, drawing simple pictures, or writing down some key words (if they are able to write). Using this suggestion is like giving someone a cane to help them walk.
- ✓ Make sure the topic of conversation is clearly established.
- ✓ If you still cannot understand, try asking questions which can be answered by “yes” or “no”. Or, ask questions with choices, such as “Would you like coffee or tea?”
- ✓ If you still cannot figure out what the person is saying, do not pretend that you understand. Instead, simply apologize for not understanding and tell the person that you can try again another time.
- ✓ Try not to shout. Aphasia does not affect a person’s hearing.
- ✓ Do not be too particular. If you have understood the person’s message, do not worry if it was not spoken perfectly.

If you would like more information, please call the Speech-Language Pathologist below:
