

# What is Aphasia?

An information guide



# What is Aphasia?

## What is aphasia?

Aphasia is a condition which can affect a person's ability to use and understand spoken or written words.

It is usually acquired as the result of a stroke but can also be caused by a number of other conditions, such as a head injury.

Sometimes a person may appear vague or hesitant due to wordfinding difficulties. Depending on the severity of the condition, there may be little or no speech. The person may have difficulty following conversations and answering yes/no questions reliably.

One of the most frustrating problems for sufferers is 'word finding' difficulties. The person often knows the word they want to say, but cannot say it. Sometimes they will use a similar word to the one they are searching for.

Aphasia can be thought of as being like trying to find a book in a library. After some searching you find the right shelf, but then you pick out the wrong book. So instead of calling a picture of a pair of scissors by the proper name, the person with wordfinding difficulties may call them 'cutters'.

This often has the effect of restricting the person's vocabulary (range of words) and often means that their conversation is not as fluent as it might be, or their sentences are shorter and words are substituted.

## **General advice for helping an aphasic person to understand:**

Gain their attention before you start to talk to them. Alert them by:

- Saying their name.
- Touching them.
- Ensuring you have eye contact.

Help them to understand you by using various means of communication yourself such as:

- Point to what you mean.
- Write a word/sentence.
- Gesture as you speak.
- Use pictures, objects and photographs.
- Reduce background noise and distractions (e.g. TV, radio, noisy and busy rooms). This will help to increase attention.

## **Help for family members**

### **Useful tips for communicating with your family member**

- Accept and encourage all means of communication, e.g. facial expression, drawing, gesture, pointing, writing, speech, tone of voice etc.
- Be honest – don't pretend to understand if you don't.
- If you don't understand, it may be best to leave it and try again later.
- Be patient as it may not be easy for either of you.

Difficulties in communication can lead to feelings of frustration, anger, social isolation and embarrassment. Therefore it is important to give opportunities to communicate and praise any attempts, whether or not they are successful.

### **The role of the speech and language therapist (SLT)**

If aphasia is identified the SLT will assess the areas of communication affected and will provide treatment where appropriate.

Goals for therapy will be agreed between you and your therapist. The length of therapy input will also be discussed.

The SLT may work with your family to provide strategies and advice to help improve communication in your own environment.

### **Will it get better?**

It depends on the type of aphasia. Some communication problems resolve quickly, some take longer to improve and others may not improve at all.

## **More information**

Your speech and language therapist is

---

If you need to contact us, then please contact the relevant speech and language department on:

Fairfield General Hospital – 0161 918 8570

North Manchester – 0161 720 2232

Royal Oldham Hospital – 0161 627 8971

## **Further information**

The Stroke Association:

[www.stroke.org.uk](http://www.stroke.org.uk) or call 0303 303 3100

Speakeasy:

[www.buryspeakeasy.org.uk](http://www.buryspeakeasy.org.uk)

Speakability:

[www.speakability.org.uk](http://www.speakability.org.uk) or call 080 8808 9572

Connect-the community disability network

[www.ukconnect.org](http://www.ukconnect.org)

**Notes:**

**If English is not your first language and you need help, please contact the Interpretation and Translation Service**

Jeśli angielski nie jest twoim pierwszym językiem i potrzebujesz pomocy, skontaktuj się z działem tłumaczeń ustnych i pisemnych

اگر انگریزی آپ کی پہلی زبان نہیں ہے اور آپ کو مدد کی ضرورت ہے تو ، براہ کرم ترجمانی اور ترجمہ خدمت سے رابطہ کریں

Dacă engleza nu este prima ta limbă și ai nevoie de ajutor, te rugăm să contactezi Serviciul de interpretare și traducere

ইংরাজী যদি আপনার প্রথম ভাষা না হয় এবং আপনার সাহায্যের প্রয়োজন হয় তবে অনুগ্রহ করে দোভাষী এবং অনুবাদ পরিষেবাটিতে যোগাযোগ করুন

إذا لم تكن الإنجليزية هي لغتك الأولى وتحتاج إلى مساعدة ، فيرجى الاتصال بخدمة الترجمة الشفوية والتحريرية

☎ : 0161 627 8770

@ : interpretation@pat.nhs.uk

To improve our care environment for Patients, Visitors and Staff, **Northern Care Alliance NHS Group** is Smoke Free including buildings, grounds & car parks.

For advice on stopping smoking contact the Specialist Stop Smoking Service on 01706 517 522

**For general enquiries please contact the Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) on 0161 604 5897**

**For enquiries regarding clinic appointments, clinical care and treatment please contact 0161 624 0420 and the Switchboard Operator will put you through to the correct department / service**

The Northern Care Alliance NHS Group (NCA) is one of the largest NHS organisations in the country, employing 17,000 staff and providing a range of hospital and community healthcare services to around 1 million people across Salford, Oldham, Bury, Rochdale and surrounding areas. Our Care Organisations are responsible for providing our services, delivering safe, high quality and reliable care to the local communities they serve.

The NCA brings together Salford Royal NHS Foundation Trust and the hospitals and community services of The Royal Oldham Hospital, Fairfield General Hospital in Bury, and Rochdale Infirmary (currently part of The Pennine Acute Hospitals NHS Trust).

 [www.facebook.com/NorthernCareAllianceNHSGroup](http://www.facebook.com/NorthernCareAllianceNHSGroup)

 [www.linkedin.com/company/northern-care-alliance-nhs-group](http://www.linkedin.com/company/northern-care-alliance-nhs-group)

 Northern Care Alliance NHS Group (NCA) @NCAlliance\_NHS

**Date of publication: December 2010**

**Date of review: April 2021**

**Date of next review: April 2023**

**Ref: PI(DS)664**

© The Northern Care Alliance NHS Group

[www.pat.nhs.uk](http://www.pat.nhs.uk)

[www.northerncarealliance.nhs.uk](http://www.northerncarealliance.nhs.uk)

