

live well, work well

Health and wellness tips for your work, home and life—brought to you by the insurance and healthcare specialists at M3.

Aphasia

Aphasia is an often unfamiliar and misunderstood disease, yet it affects one million Americans, according to the National Aphasia Association.

What is Aphasia?

Aphasia is an impairment of the ability to use or comprehend language, usually as a result of a stroke or other brain injury. However, the condition does not affect a person's intelligence; it is the ability to access, retrieve and understand thoughts and words that is the problem. People with aphasia are often mistaken as having a mental disability because of their difficulty communicating.

Causes

The most common cause of this condition is a stroke—about 25 to 40 percent of stroke survivors acquire aphasia. Head injuries, brain tumors or other neurological issues can also be the cause. It can occur in people of any age, race, nationality or gender, though it is most common among older people.

Physical Manifestation

In addition to communication challenges, many sufferers of aphasia also have weakness or paralysis of their right leg and arm. This is because aphasia is usually caused by damage to the left side of the brain, which controls movement of the right side of the body.

Recovery

For some cases, the individual will recover quickly and completely from aphasia. In other cases, recovery takes longer or may never fully happen. Speech therapy and other treatment may be helpful.

Communicating with an Aphasia Sufferer

Though communication can be more difficult, the following strategies can help you communicate with a loved one or coworker who has aphasia:

- Use short, uncomplicated sentences.
- Repeat important points to clarify as needed.

- Maintain a tone and manner appropriate for any adult (do not “talk down” to the person).
- Include the person in conversations.
- Minimize distractions such as background noise (TV, radio, etc.).
- Give the person plenty of time to speak and do not finish sentences or correct the person's speech.

Did You Know...?

About 1 in 250 people suffer from aphasia. The condition is more common than Parkinson's disease, cerebral palsy or muscular dystrophy.