



Brain Tumour Australia Information

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Communication Difficulties

Aphasia

What is Aphasia ?

Aphasia/dysphasia is the loss or impairment of language following damage to the brain.

Symptoms

A person with aphasia may:

- Speak in short or incomplete sentences
- Speak in sentences that don't make sense
- Speak unrecognizable words
- Not comprehend other people's conversation
- Interpret figurative language literally
- Begin to make spelling errors
- Write sentences that don't make sense

Symptoms of Aphasia

Aphasia can range from mild to severe. Some people may comprehend what others say relatively well but struggle to find words to speak. Other people may be able to understand what they read, but yet can't speak so that others can understand them

Depending on the part [the lobe] of the brain that is affected a person with aphasia may experience difficulty with the following:

Understanding

An individual with a brain tumour diagnosis may be unable to identify familiar or common objects or colours. Following simple commands may prove difficult. An answer of **Yes** may occur when **No** would have been the expected response and vice versa. Or an individual may respond with a nod and smile in the affirmative when really they have no understanding about both the question of an appropriate answer to provide at all.

Speaking

An individual with a brain tumour diagnosis may have difficulty communicating what they are trying to say by the use of words. Eg. they may recognise an item , but be unable to name or identify it.

The person may not be able to speak at all. Or, they may speak clearly and fluently but use made up words that make absolutely no sense or cannot be understood

Reading

If reading is affected, the person may experience difficulty understanding written words or the meaning of sentences

Writing

When writing alphabet letters may be poorly shaped, [similar to when young children are learning to write] Some letters or parts of a word may be missing and words may be misspelled

Apraxia of Speech

What is Apraxia?

Apraxia of Speech [verbal dyspraxia] is a speech disorder where the person affected has difficulty voluntarily producing speech. This occurs because of impaired programming of the speech muscles rather than muscle weakness or slowness being the cause. This condition causes people to lose the speech-making abilities they once possessed.

What Is the Difference Between Apraxia of Speech and Aphasia?

Apraxia is sometimes confused with aphasia, another communication disorder. That confusion can be complicated by the fact that the two conditions can occur together.

Apraxia refers to the difficulty someone has initiating and performing the movements needed to make speech.

This difficulty arises despite the fact that there is no weakness in the necessary muscles.

Symptoms of Apraxia of Speech

There are a variety of speech-related symptoms that can be associated with apraxia, including:

- difficulty stringing syllables together in the appropriate order to make words, or inability to do so
- difficulty saying long or complex words
- repeated attempts at pronunciation of words
- speech inconsistencies, such as being able to say a sound or word properly at certain times but not others
- incorrect inflections or stresses on certain sounds or words
- excessive use of nonverbal forms of communication
- distorting of vowel sounds
- omitting consonants at the beginnings and ends of words
- seeming to grope or struggle to make words

Ask for a referral to see a Speech Pathologist



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For the Carer- How can I help?

For easier communication with someone who has aphasia, the following strategies may be helpful:

- Reduce any noise distractions [eg. Turn off the TV or radio] when you are speaking with the person
- Keep your sentences short and simple. Questions that require only a yes or no answer may be more appropriate
- Allow time for them to communicate and try not to answer for them if others are communicating with them
- If the Speech Pathologist has provided a communication board, encourage its use by the person with Aphasia
- If they are able to write but unable to speak ensure that a pen and a writing pad are always available and encourage their use
- Use a consistent tone of voice, gestures and visual cues to make clearer what you are attempting to convey or say
- Remember the overall goal is **Communication** rather than word perfect speech. Encourage the person with aphasia to get the message understood by whatever means possible

Will things improve?

Early improvement is a good sign for future recovery.

However, in many cases there may be improvement over time