



# After Stroke

Realizing the Possible

## UNDERSTANDING APHASIA

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## **MARCH OF DIMES CANADA AND COMMUNICATION DISABILITY PROGRAM (ACDP) HELPS PEOPLE WITH APHASIA**

- » ACDP's mission is to improve communication, enhance quality of life, support independence, encourage participation in community life and provide communicative access.
- » ACDP is a community of adults with aphasia and related acquired communication disabilities and their families, trained and dedicated volunteers, communicative Disorders Assistants, Speech Language Pathologists and Social Workers.
- » The program offers services and mutual aid groups for people living with aphasia and other communication disabilities caused by stroke, brain injury, or brain illness.
- » ACDP has locations across Ontario, and currently serves York and Simcoe regions, Durham region, Peterborough area, and Greater Toronto area. Visit [www.marchofdimes.ca/ACDP](http://www.marchofdimes.ca/ACDP) for more information.

### **WHO IS THIS BROCHURE FOR?**

People with aphasia who are able to read, especially those recently diagnosed. Family and friends wishing to understand more about aphasia. Anyone who wants to learn about communicating more effectively with people who have aphasia.

### **WHAT IS APHASIA?**

- » Aphasia is a speech and language impairment which can occur after damage to the brain – most commonly following a stroke.
- » Aphasia can affect understanding, listening, speaking, reading and writing.
- » Aphasia can result in very mild problems, such as having trouble recalling or finding the right words.
- » For some people, aphasia is so severe that they cannot speak at all.
- » Many people with aphasia can listen and understand better than they can speak.

- » Some can read and/or write, whereas others cannot.
- » Some people with aphasia struggle to say even simple words and phrases.
- » Intelligence is not usually affected.

## RECOVERY FROM APHASIA

Aphasia may be temporary, longer term or lifelong. Even if you or your family member with aphasia cannot speak at all in the early days after a stroke, there is hope for improvement. Aphasia is usually at its worst in the period immediately following a stroke. Most people will improve at least a little; others will improve a lot.

## WHO CAN HELP?

March of Dimes Canada's Aphasia and Communication Disability Program helps people with aphasia.

A speech-language pathologist can advise you and your family member on the best ways to communicate, and can provide treatment that will help you improve to the highest degree possible.

Most hospitals have at least one speech-language pathologist. Ask your doctor for a referral.

## FOLLOW THESE WE-BLINKS:

- » [afterstroke.marchofdimes.ca](http://afterstroke.marchofdimes.ca)
- » [aphasiacorner.com](http://aphasiacorner.com)
- » [marchofdimes.ca/ACDP](http://marchofdimes.ca/ACDP)
- » [aphasiaaction.com](http://aphasiaaction.com)
- » [strokerecoverybc.ca](http://strokerecoverybc.ca)
- » [ukconnect.org](http://ukconnect.org)
- » [ITAWC.com](http://ITAWC.com)
- » [aphasia.org](http://aphasia.org)
- » [aphasia.ca](http://aphasia.ca)
- » [aphasia.org.au](http://aphasia.org.au)

## WHAT CAN HELP YOU TO COMMUNICATE WITH SOMEONE WHO HAS APHASIA?

There are different types of aphasia which cause different kinds of communication problems. Always remember that every person's aphasia is different. On Page 4 there are a few general suggestions that will be helpful for most people with aphasia.

## USE ANYTHING THAT HELPS YOU TO COMMUNICATE:

- » Use pen and paper
- » Write down key words
- » Draw pictures or diagrams
- » Point to photos, objects, maps and calendars
- » Use tone of voice and facial expression to help communicate
- » Use gesture or pantomime

## REMEMBER THAT UNDERSTANDING CAN BE DIFFICULT:

- » Relax - don't rush
- » Be natural
- » Be patient
- » Don't speak too quickly
- » Say one thing at a time
- » Don't yell
- » Don't pretend you understand
- » Recap to check that everyone got the right message

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- Heart and Stroke Foundation of BC and Yukon
- Province of British Columbia
- Provincial Health Services Authority
- Columbia Speech and Language Services Inc. – [columbiaspeech.com](http://columbiaspeech.com)
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For more information on Guides to Recovering from a Stroke visit our website at [afterstroke.marchofdimes.ca](http://afterstroke.marchofdimes.ca)