

Speech and Language After a Stroke

An Informational Chart

Strokes can turn your world upside down. Things that seem so simple - like speaking, listening, and eating - can be incredibly difficult for someone who has had a stroke. This chart shows some of the ways that language, speech, and swallowing can be affected by a stroke. If you or a loved one is experiencing one or more of these issues, know that there is hope. Contact us, and let us see how we can best help you.



APHASIA

Aphasia is a communication disorder that can cause difficulties in speaking, listening, reading, and writing. It does not affect the individual's intelligence.

Symptoms of aphasia vary depending on the area of the brain affected by the stroke. Signs may include:

- Difficulty with word finding
- Substitution of related or unrelated words while speaking
- Substitution or switching of sounds within words
- Difficulty speaking in sentences
- Speech that makes no sense
- Difficulty understanding and interpreting
- Difficulty reading or writing
- Trouble telling time, counting money, or doing simple math

DYSARTHRIA

Dysarthria is a motor speech disorder characterized by impaired function of the muscles used for speech production (lips, tongue, vocal folds, etc). The way dysarthria manifests itself changes depending on where in the brain the stroke took place. Some signs are:

- Speech that is "slurred," "choppy," or "mumbled"
- Excessively slow or rapid speech rate
- Reduced movement of the tongue, lips, and jaws
- Atypical pitch and rhythm of speech
- Hoarse, breathy, or nasal-sounding voice

DYSPHAGIA

Dysphagia is difficulty with eating and swallowing. These difficulties can manifest as trouble chewing, manipulating, swallowing, and moving food from the esophagus to the stomach. Dysphagia is dangerous because it increases the risk of aspiration, or food/drink entering the lungs. Signs include:

- Coughing after eating/drinking
- Gurgled voice after eating/drinking
- Slow, effortful chewing or swallowing
- Recurring pneumonia
- Weight loss or dehydration

APRAXIA OF SPEECH

Apraxia is a motor speech disorder in which the speech muscles are not weakened. Instead, the signal sent from the brain is disrupted before it reaches the mouth.

People with apraxia know what they want to say but are unable to coordinate their muscles to make the necessary speech sounds. Signs include:

- Distortions, substitutions, and/or omissions of sounds
- Inconsistency of speech sound errors
- Groping postures of articulators (tongue, lips, jaws) when speaking
- Slow speaking rate
- Difficulty with rhythm and intonation of speech

RIGHT HEMISPHERE EFFECTS

Strokes that occur in the brain's right hemisphere can cause unique deficits. In most people, the right hemisphere controls functions such as memory, attention, and reasoning, which are important for communication. Effects include:

- Difficulty concentrating or focusing attention
- Deficits in visual perception (left neglect)
- Trouble identifying and solving problems
- Problems remembering new information
- Difficulty interpreting figurative language
- Trouble with organization or planning tasks
- Difficulty remembering the day, time, or location

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Adapted from information provided by the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association
<http://www.asha.org/public/speech/disorders/AdultSandL/>