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Aphasia

National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke (NINDS)

Source

National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke (NINDS). [Aphasia Information Page](#).

Aphasia is a neurological disorder caused by damage to the portions of the brain that are responsible for language production or processing. It may occur suddenly or progressively, depending on the type and location of brain tissue involved. Primary signs of the disorder include difficulty in expressing oneself when speaking, trouble understanding speech, and difficulty with reading and writing. Aphasia is not a disease, but a symptom of brain damage. Although it is primarily seen in individuals who have suffered a stroke, aphasia can also result from a brain tumor, infection, inflammation, head injury, or dementia that affect language-associated regions of the brain. It is estimated that about 1 million people in the United States today suffer from aphasia. The type and severity of language dysfunction depends on the precise location and extent of the damaged brain tissue.

Generally, aphasia can be divided into four broad categories: (1) *Expressive aphasia* (also called Broca's aphasia) involves difficulty in conveying thoughts through speech or writing. The person knows what she/he wants to say, but cannot find the words he needs. (2) *Receptive aphasia* (Wernicke's aphasia) involves difficulty understanding spoken or written language. The individual hears the voice or sees the print but cannot make sense of the words. (3) *Global aphasia* results from severe and extensive damage to the language areas of the brain. People lose almost all language function, both comprehension and expression. They cannot speak or understand speech, nor can they read or write. (4) Individuals with *anomic* or *amnesia aphasia*, the least severe form of aphasia, have difficulty in using the correct names for particular objects, people, places, or events.