



Communication Post Stroke

Communication difficulties that may occur following stroke depend on the area of the brain affected by the stroke. These difficulties can be very frustrating and frightening for the person having suffered a stroke as well as their family and friends.

Dysarthria

Dysarthria is a speech problem resulting from weak or paralyzed muscles, typically on one side of the face, tongue and throat. Dysarthria speech is often described as slurred, mumbled or slow. Dysarthria is present in about 40% of stroke survivors¹.

Aphasia

Aphasia occurs when damage occurs in the language centers of the brain (typically on the left side of the brain). Aphasia can affect both a person's ability to speak and to understand speech and can range from mild (occasionally having difficulty finding the right word, and/or difficulty following complicated directions) to severe (unable to speak at all, unable to understand any spoken words) depending on the size of the stroke. People with aphasia may also have difficulties reading and writing. Aphasia occurs in about 30% of people who have had a stroke¹.

Apraxia of Speech

Apraxia of speech occurs when facial muscles are uncoordinated and have difficulty moving to the right place for speech, despite good strength. People with apraxia of speech struggle to produce correct sounds. This can be mild with only occasional incorrect sounds to severe producing only a single sound. About 10% of people have apraxia of speech after stroke, almost always with aphasia¹.

Cognitive Communication Disorders

Memory and thinking processes like attention, concentration and problem solving can also be affected by a stroke. This can have an impact on a person's ability to communicate effectively, become easily distracted or have difficulty staying on topic. Some subtle signs may include difficulties understanding jokes and metaphors, making inferences, understanding facial expressions and body language, and knowing when to take a turn in conversation. The person may not be aware of these difficulties and may even deny trouble.

1.

[SAC. Stroke Awareness - SAC. SAC. Published May 5, 2023. https://www.sac-oac.ca/practice-resources/toolkits/stroke-awareness/](https://www.sac-oac.ca/practice-resources/toolkits/stroke-awareness/)