



# A guide to...

## Dysphasia (also known as Aphasia)

### *Patient Information*

#### How to contact us

Speech and Language Therapy  
Watford General Hospital  
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If you need this leaflet in another language, large print, Braille or audio version, please call **01923 217 198** or email **[westherts.pals@nhs.net](mailto:westherts.pals@nhs.net)**



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## What is Dysphasia and how does it affect a person?

Dysphasia, also known as 'Aphasia' is a disorder that affects a person's ability to communicate with others. It is a result of damage to the communication centres of the brain.

Dysphasia is a complex condition and it affects each person differently and varies in severity.

**People who have Dysphasia** may find it **difficult to:**

- **Talk** – they know what they think and feel but can't get the words out.
- **Understand others when they talk** – even though hearing is intact, they are unable to understand words, questions and conversations.
- **Read**- they are unable to read written words and sentences
- **Write** – they make spelling errors, make up words or make grammatical errors.
- **Use numbers and do calculations**- they are unable to carry out sums and use numbers.

**People who have Dysphasia are:**

- Still competent adults
- Able to make their own decisions and think clearly if they don't have damage to other areas of the brain.

A person's communication difficulties can also change from day-to-day and are likely to be worse when they are tired, unwell or anxious.

## What causes Dysphasia?

Dysphasia can be caused by a number of things:

- A stroke
- Injury to the brain
- Infections and inflammation to the brain
- Tumours in the brain

Stroke is one of the most common causes of Dysphasia. A stroke interrupts the blood supply to the brain. The brain tissue becomes damaged.

The left side of your brain controls many things including:

- Your right arm and right leg
- Language and communication

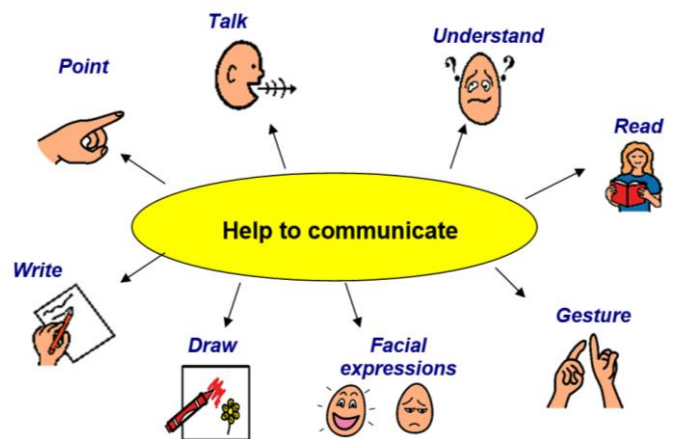
If the **left side of your brain** is damaged, the person may have **problems** moving their **right side**. You may also have language and communication problems (**Dysphasia**).

This may be different however if the person is left-handed. The language centre could be located on the right-side of the brain, therefore you may have problems moving your left side and you may also have communication problems.

## What can be done?

The speech and language therapist will:

- Have a conversation with you to get to know you
- Find out about your communication abilities and difficulties by carrying out assessments
- Speak with your family/carers and find out if you had any communication difficulties before
- Talk to family/carers and friends about your communication difficulties and provide strategies which can help communication
- If appropriate, devise a therapy programme tailored to your needs and help you optimise communication skills (communicate again)
- Provide strategies
- Set therapy goals to optimise communication skills and discuss any potential further input (inpatient e.g. rehabilitation centre or as an outpatient e.g. in your own home/clinic)
- Refer or advise on other services, for example support groups.



## What can my relatives, carers and friends do to help?

Below are some suggestions for relatives, carers and friends to be aware of to provide support and encouragement

- Treat the person who has Dysphasia with respect and in an adult way, their understanding usually remains intact
- Involve them in conversations and decisions
- Give them time to understand and respond. Do not rush them or talk over them.
- Be aware that they may tire more quickly than normal.
- Supporting the person with Dysphasia rather than teaching; For example, if they make a mistake in saying the target word but are making a good attempt.

- Concentrate on what works, not on what doesn't work; For example, if they're able to use non-verbal communication really well (e.g. pointing to something they want rather than saying the word as they make mistakes/unable to) praise them and continue to encourage them to use such an approach
- Acknowledge frustration and move on if the person with Dysphasia is getting stuck or confused
- Avoid background noise. Remove distractions
- When you think you know what the person with Dysphasia wants, clarify to make sure you understand
- Write key words or use pictures, drawing and gesture to explain your message.
- Give them verbal or written choices
- If they are able to, ask the person with Dysphasia to draw, gesture or write what they are trying to communicate.

If you would like to discuss the information in this leaflet further, please speak to your speech and language therapist.

### **List of useful organisations/ contact details:**

#### **Your local Speech and Language Therapy Department**

Watford General Hospital

Contact number: 01923 217477

#### **Association of Speech and Language Therapists in Independent Practice (ASLTIP)**

Website: <https://www.asltip.com/>

Contact number: 020 3002 3704

Email: [office@helpwithtalking.com](mailto:office@helpwithtalking.com)

#### **The Stroke Association**

Website: <https://www.stroke.org.uk/>

Contact number: 030 3303 3100

Email: [helpline@stroke.org.uk](mailto:helpline@stroke.org.uk)

#### **Different Strokes**

Website: <https://differentstrokes.co.uk/>

Contact number: 03451 307172 or 01908 317618

Email: [info@differentstrokes.co.uk](mailto:info@differentstrokes.co.uk)