Adult Aphasia
What is aphasia?

• Aphasia is a language disorder.
• It can cause problems with
  ◆ understanding
  ◆ speaking
  ◆ reading
  ◆ writing
• Thinking (cognitive) skills are usually good.
What causes aphasia?

- Aphasia is caused by brain damage from stroke or head injury.
- Damage is usually to the left side of the brain.
  - This is where the language centers are located in most people.
What are the types of aphasia?

• Everyone with aphasia will have different skills and different problems.
• Problems will depend on the type of brain injury and how severe it is.
• The general types are
  ◆ expressive aphasia
  ◆ receptive aphasia
  ◆ global aphasia
What is expressive aphasia?

- People with expressive aphasia have trouble speaking and writing. They may
  - only be able to say one or two words at a time
  - have trouble thinking of the words they want to say
  - leave words out of sentences
  - have problems spelling words
  - have trouble putting together sentences that make sense
What is receptive aphasia?

- People with receptive aphasia have trouble understanding and reading. They may
  - be able to follow only simple directions
  - have trouble following a conversation
  - need to have information repeated
  - need visual or touch cues to help them understand
  - have trouble understanding what they read
  - say words that don’t make sense but not know that others can’t understand them
What is global aphasia?

- Global aphasia is the most severe type of aphasia.
- People with global aphasia have a lot of trouble with speaking, writing, understanding, and reading.
- Their skills may vary.
  - They may be better at understanding than at speaking.
More about aphasia...

- Most people with aphasia will have some trouble with speaking, writing, understanding, and/or reading.
- The types of problems will be very different for each person.
How is aphasia different from other speech problems?

- When we communicate, we use both speech and language.
  - Speech is how we say sounds and put them together into words.
  - Language is the words we use and understand.
- Stroke and brain injury can cause speech problems, including
  - dysarthria
  - apraxia
What is dysarthria?

• Dysarthria
  ◆ is caused by muscle weakness or tightness
  ◆ may cause people to
    • slur their words
    • not be able to speak loudly
    • sound like they are talking out of their nose (nasality)
What is apraxia?

• Apraxia
  ◆ is caused by problems getting speech muscles to do what the brain wants them to do
  ◆ may cause people to
    • mix up sounds in words
    • say the wrong sounds
    • say words and sounds differently every time they try to say them
    • struggle to say sounds
What else do I need to know about aphasia?

• People with aphasia can also have dysarthria or apraxia.
• It can be hard to know if aphasia, dysarthria, or apraxia are causing the most problems.
• A person’s skills may improve as the brain heals.
  ☐ It may take days or months.
  ☐ Improvement soon after the stroke is called spontaneous recovery.
Can a person with aphasia have other problems, too?

- A person who has had a stroke or brain injury may have
  - weakness or numbness on one side of the body
  - trouble seeing
  - problems remembering things
  - trouble solving problems or thinking clearly
  - problems chewing and swallowing food and drink, called dysphagia
What if a person speaks more than one language?

- If a person learned two languages at the same time
  - both languages are most likely located in the same part of the brain
  - they will probably have trouble in both languages
What if a person speaks more than one language? (continued)

- If a person learned one language before the second
  - the languages may be located in different parts of the brain
  - they may have trouble in only one language, or in both
What help is available for a person with aphasia?

- A speech-language pathologist, or SLP, is trained to work with people who have speech and language problems like aphasia.
- SLPs work in hospitals, rehabilitation hospitals, nursing homes, clinics, and private practice, and may go to a person’s home.
What help is available for a person with aphasia? (continued)

• Support groups and stroke clubs may be available.
  - People with aphasia can meet and learn from each other.
  - Spouses and other caregivers can get support, too.
How does an SLP help?

- SLPs can
  - test people to see what they do well and what is hard to do
  - work with the person on the problems he or she is having
  - teach the person with aphasia and his or her family ways to communicate more easily
  - help find other ways to communicate (called augmentative and alternative communication, or AAC) if the person can’t talk
What resources are available?

• For more information about aphasia and other speech, language, and swallowing disorders, go to ASHA’s Web site, www.asha.org/public.

• Other organizations include
  ◆ American Stroke Association
    www.strokeassociation.org
  ◆ Aphasia Hope Foundation
    www.aphasiahope.org
  ◆ National Aphasia Association
    www.aphasia.org