



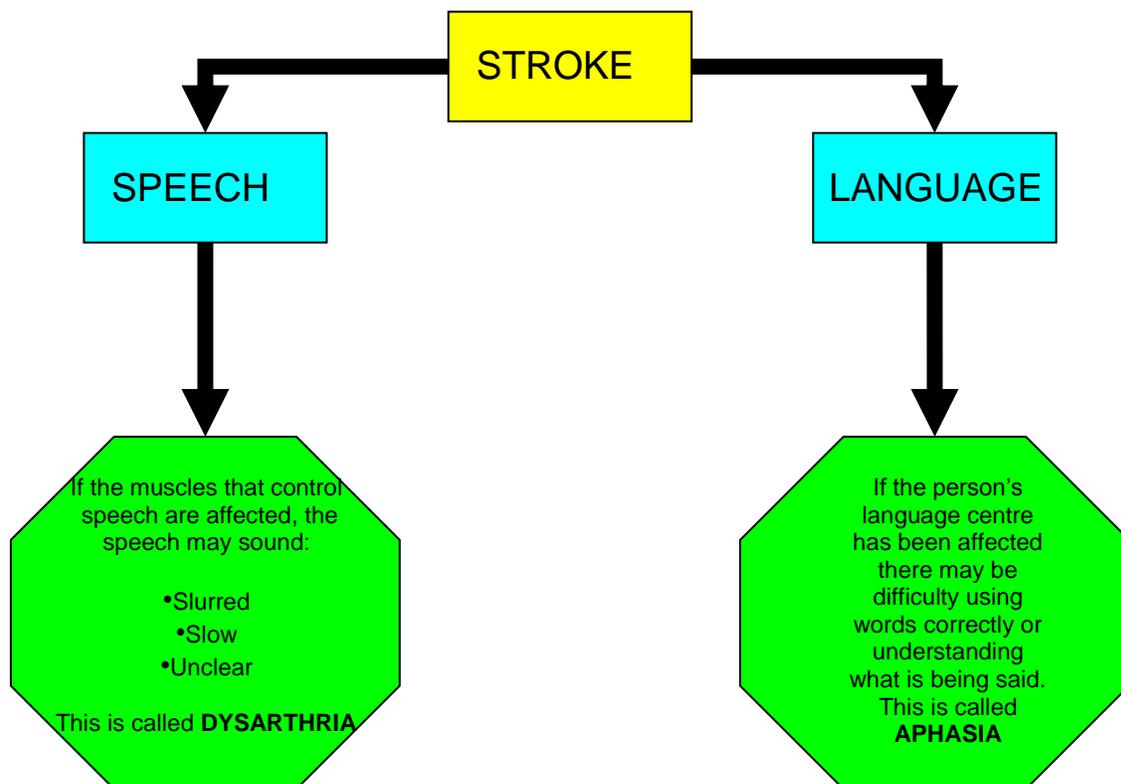
Information on Stroke and its effect on communication

What is stroke?

'Stroke' is a sudden brain attack. The blood flowing to the brain is interrupted. It may be caused by a clot or bleeding in the brain and causes brain damage.

What are the effects of stroke?

Stroke affects people differently. Some people have problems communicating after a stroke. Communication involves speech, language and non-verbal skills such as body language, eye contact, facial expression, tone of voice and gesture. The brain controls the muscles of speech and also holds our language centre which helps us to understand and use words and sentences.



What is Dysarthria exactly?

Dysarthria is a speech disorder. This means that the person's speech is difficult to understand due to weak, paralysed or uncoordinated speech muscles. The main muscles involved in speech are the lips, tongue, soft palate and vocal cords.

Someone with dysarthria may have speech that sounds slow or monotonous or may be slurred or indistinct. This may be worse when the person is tired.

What is Aphasia exactly?

Aphasia is a language problem that affects a person's ability to communicate and makes it difficult to understand and use words and sentences.

This means the person knows what he / she wants to say BUT it is hard to get the messages in and out of the brain.

When there is difficulty processing incoming messages, the person may not understand what is being said to him/her. It is as if people are speaking a foreign language that the person does not understand. Reading may also be difficult as the words and sentences on the page may have lost their meaning.

When there is a problem with messages leaving the brain, the person often knows quite clearly what the message he / she wishes to convey is, but the words and sentences do not come out the way they are intended.

The person may be searching for the words but may be unable to retrieve them. Sometimes the wrong word or a completely unrelated word can be said.

A person with **aphasia** might have some or all of the following:

- Difficulty talking
- Problems understanding what people are saying
- Difficulties talking with a group of people
- Problems concentrating in conversation
- Problems reading even single words
- Writing words and even spelling own name may be difficult
- Mixing up words
- Mixing up numbers

Remember if you have aphasia you can still do many things:

- You know what you want to say
- You can make your own decisions

How can I help someone who has communication difficulties after stroke?

Get some advice from a speech and language therapist about the best strategies for you or your relative/friend who has experienced a stroke.

Here are some general tips which may help:

- Give the person extra time in the conversation
- Remove background noise e.g. turn off the T.V.
- Avoid changing topics abruptly
- Use any means of communicating! Use a pen and paper for writing and drawing. For example you could write down or draw images of key words in the conversation.
- Check with the person to make sure they have understood.
- Use any communication devices and strategies the Speech and Language Therapist has recommended.
- Using lots of gestures and facial expression also helps get across your meaning.
- Remember... Words can be difficult for people with aphasia – try and take the emphasis off the words (HOW it sounds) and focus more on the message (WHAT is being communicated).

Who to contact

If you would like some more information or advice regarding stroke and its effect on communication, please contact your local primary care team/health centre/Speech & Language Therapist. Alternatively ask your G.P or Public Health Nurse.

Useful websites: www.IASLT.ie (Irish Association of Speech and Language Therapists)
www.IASLTPP.com (Irish Association of Speech and Language Therapists in Private Practice)