

- ✓ Remember that a person with aphasia is still an adult and still thinks like an adult. Even though they are having trouble reading, they may feel humiliated if you give them a children's book to read.
- ✓ Be aware of how much we rely on reading. Think of how often we read street signs, menus, newspapers or grocery labels. Keep in mind that the person with aphasia may no longer understand a lot of this material and may need your help as a "translator".
- ✓ A picture is worth a thousand words! You'd be surprised how much information you can get by looking at a picture and reading only one or two words. So, instead of writing a letter to someone who has trouble reading, send pictures with some key words written down.

*One in a series of pamphlets about  
Speech-Language after  
Illness or Injury to the Brain*

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*This series written by Justine Hamilton and Deidre Sperry, speech-language pathologists. Adapted with their permission for use by OSLA.*

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## LEARNING ABOUT APHASIA

# Reading



## LEARNING ABOUT APHASIA

### Reading

Some illnesses or injuries can cause damage to part of the brain. A stroke is an example, when a blood vessel in the brain gets blocked or when it bursts.

The result can be many different problems, depending on the part and amount of the brain that is damaged.

One effect on speech is called aphasia. The word 'aphasia' can mean many different things. Aphasia can affect a person's speaking, understanding, reading or writing, or any combination of these.

This pamphlet explains the effect on reading.

- It is important to mention that being able to read out loud does not guarantee being able to understand what was read. These are two different things.
- Some people have severe aphasia and can hardly understand any written words or sentences. Other people have mild aphasia and may only have difficulty understanding long or difficult material, like a magazine article or a book.
- Aphasia affects a person's ability to understand words and sentences. It does not affect a person's intelligence.
- The illness or injury has just made it difficult for the person's brain to "translate" the written words and sentences into thought.
- To help you understand what this is like, imagine yourself trying to read a newspaper in a foreign language. You would have a lot of trouble understanding the articles. But you certainly wouldn't think that you had suddenly lost your intelligence!

### SO WHAT CAN YOU DO TO HELP?

- Because people usually read by themselves, there isn't much you can do to help. However, simply understanding what the person is going through can help a lot.
- Check with the speech therapist to see how well the person with aphasia can read. The speech therapist can then give you specific ideas about what type of reading material would be good practice.