



Neurological Practice

A specialist section of College of Occupational Therapists



APRAXIA FOLLOWING STROKE IN ADULTS

A LEAFLET FOR OCCUPATIONAL THERAPISTS TO USE WITH PATIENTS/CLIENTS AND THEIR CARERS

Praxis is the ability to perform skilled movements required for daily activities. This involves being able to:

- a) Form the idea and know what to do;
- b) Organise the sequence of the movement involved in the activity;
- c) Carry out the planned movement in a smooth sequence.

Difficulty with this is called 'apraxia'.

This leaflet describes some of the difficulties you may experience, followed by useful tips, which may help overcome some problems.

There is space at the end of each section for your Occupational Therapist to write any tips specifically for you. Your Occupational Therapist's contact details are at the end of this leaflet.

Common Difficulties

- Doing activities in the wrong order.
- Missing out stages of the activity, for example, pouring boiled water into a teapot and not putting a teabag in.
- Not finishing the activity, for example, taking one slice of a piece of meat and trying to eat it even though it has not been completely cut.
- Difficulty using objects correctly, for example, using a pencil as a comb or holding a comb flat against the head instead of with the teeth at an angle.
- Using a part of the body as an object, for example, using a finger instead of a toothbrush.
- Using the wrong hand actions to do the activity.
- Doing the movement of an action without the object, for example, doing stirring movements with a hand without holding a spoon in it, when making a hot drink.
- Repeating hand actions in a following activity, for example, pouring tea from the teapot into a cup and then doing the same action with the sugar bowl, instead of spooning it in.

Useful Tips

- Do activities in a familiar environment at an appropriate time of day.
- Do activities in the same order and environment each time to re-learn the order of the activity – written or drawn cue cards may help.
- Repeat activities so they become automatic.
- Visually imagine the movement before attempting to carry it out.

Useful Tips for Carers

- Encourage automatic activity and keep verbal commands to a minimum.
- Indirect commands may help such as "are you *thirsty?*" rather than "*pick up the cup*".
- Encourage the person to recognise errors and to compensate appropriately.
- Encourage the person to say or gesture the next stage of the activity.
- Give support and reassurance. People with apraxia often feel frustrated and stupid. It is important to explain that you understand they are not being uncooperative and that certain movements are difficult.

Additional tips specifically for you

Your Occupational Therapist's contact details:

Name:

Address:

Telephone:

Source of information: Edmans JA, Champion A, Hill L, Ridley M, Skelly F, Jackson T, Neale M (2000) *Occupational Therapy and Stroke*. London: Whurr Publishers Ltd.

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