

Know the Signs ... Know the Symptoms

FTD syndromes characterized predominantly by the gradual loss of the ability to speak, read, write or understand what others are saying fall under the category of primary progressive aphasia, or PPA. Experts further subdivide PPA into three clinical subtypes based on the specific language skills that are most affected.

The hallmark of semantic variant PPA is the progressive loss of the meanings of words. If there are additional major problems in identifying objects or faces, the condition is called semantic dementia.

Other language skills, including the ability to produce speech and to repeat phrases and sentences spoken by others, are unaffected. However, although the affected person may continue to speak fluently, their speech becomes vague and difficult to understand because many words are omitted or substituted. As the disorder progresses, people with svPPA (also known as PPA-S) may also exhibit changes in behavior similar to those seen in bvFTD, such as disinhibition and rigid food preferences.

The following are possible symptoms of svPPA:

SYMPTOMS	POSSIBLE SIGNS
<p>Anomia</p> <p>Inability to recall the names of objects</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Difficulty “finding the right word”• Cannot identify a picture of a truck• Substitutes another word in the same category such as “car” for “truck”
<p>Reduced single-word comprehension</p> <p>Unable to recall what words mean, especially words that are less familiar or less frequently used</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• May include an inability to recognize people as well as objects• Asks “what is a truck?” when speaker uses the word in a sentence• Difficulty recognizing a family member the person does not see often
<p>Impaired object knowledge</p> <p>Unable to remember what a familiar object is or how it is used</p>	<p>For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Cannot identify common kitchen utensils and how they are used in cooking

Semantic Variant PPA

SYMPTOMS	POSSIBLE SIGNS
<p>Surface dyslexia/ dysgraphia</p> <p>Difficulty reading and writing words that do not follow pronunciation or spelling rules; such words are spelled or spoken “as if” they followed the rules</p>	<p>For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Writes “no” instead of “know”• Reads “broad” as “brode”

Doctors will consider a clinical diagnosis of svPPA when the following symptoms are observed: anomia; impaired single-word comprehension, and three of the following: Impaired object knowledge; surface dyslexia or dysgraphia; no reduction in ability to repeat words or phrases; no reduction in speech production.

If you have concern that you or a loved one may have been misdiagnosed with another condition—or about any of the signs and symptoms listed above—it is important to consult a doctor.

If you’re facing this diagnosis—or if you have questions—contact AFTD for help and support.

