

Stroke

Frequently Asked Questions

What is a Stroke?

A stroke occurs when the blood supply to part of the brain is suddenly interrupted (ischaemic) or when a blood vessel in the brain bursts (haemorrhagic), spilling blood into the spaces surrounding brain cells. Brain cells die when they no longer receive oxygen and nutrients from the blood or there is sudden bleeding into or around the brain.

What are the symptoms and signs of stroke?

The following symptoms and signs may occur singly or in various combinations :

- sudden numbness or weakness, especially on one side of the body
- altered mental states
- speech disturbance
- visual disturbance in one or both eyes
- sudden difficulty with walking
- dizziness
- loss of balance or coordination
- seizure
- coma
- sudden severe headache with no known cause (likely haemorrhagic)
- nausea and vomiting (likely haemorrhagic)
- neck stiffness (likely haemorrhagic)

If you experience any of the symptoms, please do not hesitate to seek urgent medical attention from your doctor

What are the treatments for Stroke?

Treatment for Stroke

▪ **Acute treatment**

Acute stroke treatment attempt to stop a stroke while it is happening by quickly dissolving the blood clot causing an ischaemic stroke or by stopping the bleeding of a hemorrhagic stroke. Medications may be used for ischaemic stroke. The commonly used classes of drugs to prevent or treat stroke are antithrombotics (antiplatelet agents and anticoagulants) and thrombolytics. For haemorrhagic stroke, neurosurgery may be required occasionally.

▪ **Post-stroke rehabilitation**

Rehabilitation helps patients overcome disabilities that result from stroke. It usually involves a holistic approach by allied healthcare professionals from speech therapy, occupational Therapy and physiotherapy.

What are the consequences of having a Stroke?

A Stroke can adversely affect the whole body. A common disability that results from stroke is complete paralysis on one side of the body, called hemiplegia. A related disability that is not as debilitating as paralysis is one-sided weakness or hemiparesis.

Stroke may cause difficulties with thinking, attention, learning, judgment, and memory. Stroke survivors often have problems understanding or forming speech. A stroke can lead to emotional problems. Stroke patients may have difficulty controlling their emotions or may express inappropriate emotions. Many stroke patients experience depression. Stroke survivors may also have numbness or strange sensations.

How can I prevent a Stroke?

While having a family history of stroke plays a role in your risk, there are many risk factors you can control:

- If you have high blood pressure, work with your doctor to get it under control. Many people do not realise they have high blood pressure, which usually produces no symptoms but is a major risk factor for heart disease and stroke. Managing your high blood pressure is the most important thing you can do to avoid stroke
- If you smoke, quit
- If you have diabetes, learn how to manage it. As with high blood pressure, diabetes usually causes no symptoms but it increases the chance of stroke
- If you are overweight, start maintaining a healthy diet and exercising regularly
- If there is any other underlying medical condition that may increase the likelihood of stroke, seek early expert treatment

As with most medical conditions, prevention is better than cure. Start controlling your risk factors now, and lower your risks of suffering a debilitating stroke.

Another Health Advisory brought to you by

