

STROKE

SYMPTOMS

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CMG Archives

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IMPORTANT

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Stroke Symptoms

Stroke symptoms vary according to the type of stroke that has occurred and which part of the brain is affected. Symptoms typically occur suddenly, within seconds or minutes. It is rare for the symptoms to get worse over a period of hours or days.

Stroke and Transient Ischaemic Attack (TIA) symptoms can include:

- Loss of consciousness
- Seizures
- Difficulty speaking
- Confusion or difficulty understanding
- Loss of balance or coordination
- Severe headache
- Numbness, weakness or inability to move the face, arm or leg on one side of the body
- Drooping of face, eye, or mouth.
- Blurred vision or sudden loss of sight in one eye

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Recognising Stroke

A way to recognise stroke is to evaluate the individual's speech, face, and arms.

- Check for blurred speech - blurred or incoherent speech is an indication of stroke.

- Check the face for signs of drooping, especially around the eyes and mouth - drooping is an indication of stroke.
- Get the person to raise and hold their arms in a horizontal position - arm weakness is an indication of stroke.

If the signs of stroke are present, emergency help should be immediately called for.

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Types of stroke

Types of stroke include:

- **Haemorrhagic Stroke** - this is caused by bleeding inside the brain, which can be in consequence of a blood vessel rupturing within the brain or on the brain's surface.
- **Ischaemic Stroke** - this type of stroke happens when the blood supply to part of the brain is blocked by a blood clot or a piece of fatty material.
- **Transient Ischaemic Attack** (TIA or "mini-stroke") - is similar to a full-blown stroke; however, the symptoms are typically only temporary. TIAs occur when the blood supply to the brain is interrupted for a short time.
- Stroke in consequence of a **cervical artery dissection** - this is when the lining in one of the arteries in the neck is torn, thus restricting the blood supply to the brain.

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Common problems

Common problems following a stroke can include:

- Problems with speech
- Memory and concentration difficulties
- Weakness or paralysis, typically on one side of the body
- Extreme tiredness
- Difficulty in controlling the bladder and bowel movements (incontinence)
- Difficulty in swallowing (dysphagia)
- Extreme weakness
- Anxiety and depression
- Problems with reading, writing, and basic arithmetic
- problems with vision - including blurred vision, double vision, and/or partial blindness

These problems often improve as recovery is made.

Some strokes, such as the Transient Ischaemic Attack, may be relatively mild, and the effects thereof only temporary. However, other strokes may be more severe and can cause lasting and serious damage. How much damage a stroke will cause is dependent upon where in the brain the stroke occurred and how much brain tissue affected.

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Complications

One of the main effects of stroke is the inability to move some or all of the body, and this immobility can increase the possibility of:

- Seizures - possibly occurring in the weeks and months following the initial stroke episode.
- Contractures (altered position of the hands, arms, legs, or feet, due to muscle spasm and tightness)
- Constipation
- Pressure sores
- Pneumonia
- Deep vein thrombosis (DVT)

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Causes

A stroke occurs when the blood supply to the brain is disrupted. This can be the consequence of a blood clot blocking an artery in the brain (ischaemic stroke), or a blood vessel rupturing in the brain (haemorrhagic stroke).

Identified Risk factors for stroke include:

- A family history of stroke/heart disease
- Smoking
- High blood pressure
- High cholesterol
- Being overweight or obese
- Diabetes
- Abnormal heart beat (arrhythmia)
- Conditions that increase your bleeding tendency (e.g. Haemophilia)
- Regular, heavy drinking
- Using drugs, such as heroin, cocaine, etc

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