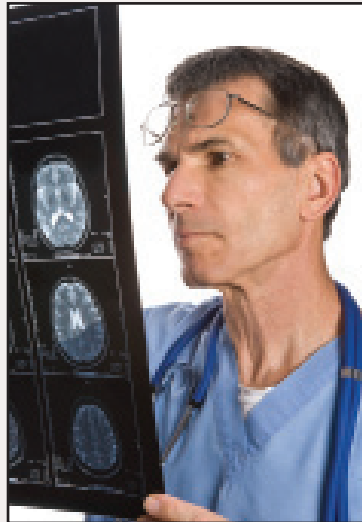


## What is a Stroke

**S**troke is a disease that affects the blood vessels that supply blood to the brain. Stroke occurs when a blood vessel that brings oxygen and nutrients to the brain either bursts (hemorrhagic stroke) or is clogged by a blood clot or some other mass (ischemic stroke). Within a few minutes, brain cells begin to die.

Stroke is a medical emergency and prompt treatment of stroke is crucial. Few are aware that a treatment for stroke exists and must be given no more than three hours after symptoms begin. Early treatment can minimize damage to your brain and potential stroke complications. The good news is that strokes can be treated and many fewer Americans now die of strokes than was the case 20 or 30 years ago. Improvement in the control of major risk factors for stroke—high blood pressure, smoking, and high cholesterol—is likely responsible for the decline.



*Magnetic resonance angiography (MRA) or CT angiography may be done to check for abnormal blood vessels in the brain that may have caused the stroke.*

## Ischemic Stroke

Ischemic stroke occurs when a blood vessel that supplies blood to the brain is blocked by a blood clot. This may happen because a clot may form in an artery that is already very narrow. This is called a thrombus. If it completely blocks the artery, it is called a thrombotic stroke.

A clot may break off from somewhere in the body and travel up to the brain to block a smaller artery. This is called an embolism. It causes an embolic stroke.

Ischemic strokes may result from clogged arteries,

a condition called atherosclerosis. This may affect the arteries within the brain or the arteries in the neck that carry blood to the brain. Fat, cholesterol, and other substances collect on the wall of the arteries, forming a sticky substance called plaque. Over time, the plaque builds up. This often makes it hard for blood to flow properly, which can cause the blood to clot.

## Hemorrhagic Stroke

A Hemorrhagic stroke occurs when a blood vessel in part of the brain becomes weak and bursts open, causing blood to leak into the brain. Some people have defects in the blood vessels of the brain that make this more likely. The flow of blood that occurs after the blood vessel ruptures damages brain cells.

## Risk Factors

Stroke risk factors include the following:

- Being age 55 or older
- High blood pressure
- High Cholesterol
- Cigarette smoking
- Diabetes
- Obesity

\* Cerebrovascular accident (CVA) is the medical term for an event more commonly known as “stroke” and for this purpose the word “stroke” will be used.

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"Excellence in Home Care"

# Stroke Education

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- Heart Disease
- Previous stroke or family history of stroke
- Use of birth control pills or hormone therapy
- Head injury
- Other factors that can increase your risk of stroke include heavy binge drinking and the use of illicit drugs such as cocaine.

## Symptoms

The symptoms of stroke depend on what part of the brain is damaged. In some cases, a person may not even be aware that he or she has had a stroke.

Symptoms usually develop suddenly and without warning, or they may occur on and off for the first day or two. Symptoms are usually most severe when the stroke first happens, but they may slowly get worse. A headache may occur, especially if the stroke is caused by bleeding in the brain.

## Treatment

If you think you may be experiencing a stroke, or you know someone who is, call 911 to get immediate medical care. Treatment includes surgery or medications. Clot-bursting drugs (thrombolytic therapy)

### SYMPTOMS

#### Headache

- Starts suddenly and may be severe
- Occurs when lying flat
- Wakes you up from sleep
- Gets worse when you change positions or when you bend, strain, or cough

#### Other symptoms

- Muscle weakness in the face, arm or leg (usually one side)
- Numbness or tingling one side of the body
- Trouble speaking or understanding others who are speaking
- Problems with eyesight, including decreased vision, double vision, or total loss of vision
- Sensation changes that affect touch and the ability to feel pain, pressure, or different temperatures
- Changes in hearing
- Changes in alertness including sleepiness, unconsciousness, and coma
- Personality, mood or emotional changes
- Confusion or loss of memory
- Difficulty swallowing
- Changes in taste
- Difficulty writing or reading
- Loss of coordination and balance
- Dizziness or abnormal sensation of movement (vertigo)
- Lack of bladder or bowel control

### TESTS TO SEE IF IT IS A STROKE ACT F.A.S.T.

- FACE: Ask the person to smile. Does one side of the face droop?
- ARMS: Ask the person to raise both arms. Does one arm drift downward?
- SPEECH: Ask the person to repeat a simple sentence. Are the words slurred? Can he/she repeat the sentence correctly?
- TIME: If the person shows any of these symptoms, time is important. Call 911 or get to the hospital fast. Brain cells are dying.

may be used if the stroke is caused by a blood clot and are quite effective if used within the first three hours of having a stroke.

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has approved the clot-dissolving drug tissue plasminogen activator (tPA) to treat strokes caused by blood clots. It must be administered in the ER within that narrow window.

## Bethany HomeHealth Can Help

Our skilled nurses help patients manage their recovery in their homes through:

- Treatment evaluation and recommendations,
- Screening to help prevent secondary problems such as stiff joints, pressure ulcers, and pneumonia.

Physical and occupational therapists provide:

- Safety evaluation and training,
- Gait training,
- Muscular strengthening exercises.

The rehabilitation goal is for the patient to be as independent and productive as possible by collaborating with the physician and educating the family and patient. Strong support can greatly enhance recovery.

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