

QUICK GUIDE

Stroke

Strokes are a type of acquired brain injury and happen when blood flow is cut off to part of the brain. Strokes prevent oxygen and nutrients from reaching the brain, which can cause damage in just minutes. Understanding what puts an individual at risk for a stroke, how to spot a stroke in the moment, and what recovery looks like are the three main concepts covered below.

What puts someone at a higher risk for a stroke?

While strokes can happen to people of any age, demographic, or background, the risk of a stroke generally increases with age and with declining physical health. You may be at a greater risk for stroke if you have:

- A family history of strokes
- High blood pressure
- High cholesterol
- Diabetes
- Heart disease
- Certain blood disorders

Leading a healthier lifestyle can reduce the risk of having a stroke. Things like regular exercise, eating a low-fat, low-cholesterol diet, and limiting alcohol consumption are all ways to feel physically and mentally better.

How do I spot a stroke?

If you think you or someone else may be suffering from a stroke, use the acronym **F.A.S.T.** to check for these common symptoms:

Face droops **A**rms weak **S**peech slurs **T**ime to call 911

Additional symptoms of a stroke outside of F.A.S.T. are:

- Confusion
- Difficulty seeing
- Severe headache
- Difficulty walking or standing
- Numbness in the face, arms, and/or legs

What does recovery from a stroke look like?

Every stroke is unique and the impact it has on a person depends on factors like the severity of the stroke and where in the brain it occurred. Partial paralysis, difficulty speaking, and reduced mobility are the most common ways a stroke can impact someone in both the short and long-term. Strokes can also take a toll on a person's mental health, causing changes in their behavior, self-control, personality, and emotions. After a stroke, it is typical to have trouble completing daily tasks and need assistance from family, friends, and medical professionals while recovering.

Rehabilitation after a stroke often includes seeing a variety of specialists to fully recover. The time needed in rehab will depend on individual circumstances, but in general, individuals benefit from:

- » **Physical Therapy** (PT) – to restore physical strength, mobility, and endurance
- » **Occupational Therapy** (OT) – to complete daily tasks, regain independence, and return to normal activity
- » **Speech-Language Therapy** (SLT) – to improve speech and the ability to communicate
- » **Mental Health Counseling** – to cope better with emotional changes and other mental health challenges

Everyone's rehabilitation will look different; but, it can help individuals with things like:

- » Improving their ability to walk and move about, increase strength and endurance
- » Caring for their day-to-day needs, such as dressing, toileting, hygiene, and eating
- » Increasing their ability to communicate and understand others

The Brain Injury Association of Virginia can help you better understand stroke, other forms of brain injury, and consult with you about your personal situation. We can then direct you to services in your area you might need. Our services are confidential and free.

Learn more on **biav.net**