





### Is a stroke a type of brain injury?

Strokes, medically referred to as Cerebral Vascular Accidents (CVAs), are the most frequent cause of Acquired Brain Injury. They can occur at any age, although they are more common among older people. They occur when blood flow is cut off to an area of the brain. When brain cells do not receive the oxygen they need they can begin to die.

How an individual is affected by a stroke will depend on where the stroke occurs in the brain. Some individuals recover completely from a stroke and others have some type of disability as a result.

Spotting a stroke and getting treatment fast can make a difference. Think F.A.S.T

## Recognize the signs of stroke **F.A.S.T.**

 <p><b>FACE</b> Ask the person to <b>smile</b>. Does one side droop?</p>	 <p><b>ARMS</b> Ask the person to <b>raise both arms</b>. Does one arm drift downwards?</p>	 <p><b>SPEECH</b> Ask the person to <b>repeat a simple sentence</b>. Are the words slurred?</p>	 <p><b>TIME</b> If the person shows any of these symptoms, call <b>911</b> immediately.</p>
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**Learning the signs of a stroke can HELP SAVE LIVES**

SOURCE: Adapted from the Cincinnati Pre-hospital Stroke Scale, University of Cincinnati, 1997.

Stroke is the leading cause of serious, long-term disability in the United States. Each year, **approximately 795,000** people suffer a stroke. About 600,000 of these are first attacks, and 185,000 are recurrent attacks. Nearly three-quarters of all strokes occur in people over the age of 65.

**There are two major causes or types of strokes:**

**Hemorrhagic Strokes** are caused by the blood vessel in the brain bursting (hemorrhaging) or leaking. These are less common, the blood spills into or around the brain and causes swelling and pressure. This can damage the cells and tissue in the brain.



**Ischemic Strokes** are caused when a blood vessel carrying blood to the brain is blocked by a clot. This causes blood to not be able to reach the brain. High blood pressure is the most common risk factor for this type of stroke.

**The problems caused by a stroke** depend a lot on where the stroke occurred in the brain and how much of the brain was effected. Every stroke is unique. But strokes typically affect people in similar ways.

The effects of a stroke depend on many factors, they include the location of the obstruction and how much tissue is damaged. Because one side of the brain controls the opposite side of the body complications can occur on one side of the body.

### **Right Brain Stroke**

The right hemisphere of the brain controls the movement of the left side of the body.

Complications can include:

- Paralysis on the left side of the body.
- Vision problems (prone to fall)
- Quick or impulsive behavior and not aware of deficits
- Memory problems

## Left Brain Stroke

The left hemisphere of the brain controls movement of the right side of the body. Complications can include:

- Paralysis on the right side of the body
- Speech or language problems
- Slow, cautious behavior
- Memory problems

## Brain Stem Stroke

The brain stem is the area of the brain that controls all of our involuntary functions that keep us alive such as breathing rate, blood pressure and heartbeat. The brain stem also controls abilities such as eye movements, hearing, speech and swallowing. A person generally cannot speak or move below the neck.

### Common Symptoms of a Brainstem Stroke



Difficulty breathing



Difficulty speaking



Problems with  
chewing and  
swallowing



Paralysis



Blurred Vision



Weakness of  
the limbs



Partial or complete  
hearing loss



Numbness or loss  
of sensation

## **Recovery from Stroke**

How long recovery takes and to what extent, depends on the severity of the stroke and whether there are complications. Most people need rehabilitation which can last months or even years. Rehabilitation involves treatments to help regain independence and include therapies such as Physical Therapy, Occupational Therapy and Speech Language Therapy. Rehabilitation helps patients to:

- Improve their ability to walk and move about, increase strength and endurance
- Care for their day to day needs, such as dressing, toileting, hygiene, eating
- Increase their ability to communicate and understand others

Reactions such as frustration, anxiety and depression are normal and sometimes counseling is needed to stay motivated and adapt to the changes. Being an active participant in recovery includes a mindset that encourages learning new ways of doing activities and adapting to a different set of abilities and limitations. It also includes making lifestyle changes such eating healthier and avoiding smoking and other habits that can bring about another stroke.

Sources:

[www.Mayoclinic.org](http://www.Mayoclinic.org)

[www.Stroke.org](http://www.Stroke.org)