

Stroke is a Brain Injury

Get the Facts

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.

Stroke is A 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, and happen 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

Face droops **A**rm drifts **S**peech slurs **T**ime is critical

Types of Stroke

Hemorrhagic Strokes are caused by a blood vessel in the brain bursting (hemorrhaging) or leaking, causing swelling and pressure. **Ischemic Strokes** happen when a blood vessel to the brain is blocked by a clot, causing blood to not be able to reach parts of the brain. High blood pressure is the most common risk factor for this type of stroke. Clot busting drugs used at the onset of a stroke may reduce the damage caused by 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 left side of the brain controls the right side of the body, and the right side of the brain controls the left side of the body.

Right Brain Stroke

- Vision problems (prone to fall)
- Quick or impulsive behavior
- Not aware of deficits
- Memory problems

Left Brain Stroke

- 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.

How does someone recover from a stroke?

How long recovery takes and how much recovery happens 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 includes therapies such as Physical Therapy (PT), Occupational Therapy (OT), and Speech Language Therapy (SLT).

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; sometimes counseling is needed to stay motivated and adapt to the changes. Recovery requires a mindset that encourages learning new ways of doing things, adapting to a different set of abilities, and making lifestyle changes such as eating healthier and avoiding smoking.