

UNDERSTANDING STROKE

WHAT IS A STROKE?

A stroke is a disease that affects the arteries surrounding and within the brain. When these arteries burst or are blocked by a clot, brain cells die and parts of the brain are damaged.

WHAT ARE THE TYPES OF STROKES?

Transient Ischemic Attack (TIA) -TIA's are different from the other types of stroke because blood flow to the brain is interrupted for a shorter period of time, usually less than five minutes. TIA's are also referred to as "mini-strokes." They are a warning sign of future major strokes. Just like other types of stroke, TIA's require emergency medical care.

Ischemic Stroke - happens when blood flow through an artery that supplies oxygen-rich blood to the brain is obstructed. Blood clots that develop in the brain or travel to the brain from elsewhere in the circulatory system usually cause the blockages that trigger ischemic strokes.

Hemorrhagic Stroke - happens when an artery surrounding or within the brain ruptures and bleeds. The leaked blood puts pressure on the brain cells, damaging them. Aneurysms, or bulges in the arteries that can burst, can cause hemorrhagic stroke. High blood pressure, which damages and weakens arteries, is another major cause.

SIGNS OF A STROKE

- Sudden instability, difficulty walking
- Sudden vision trouble, blurred vision
- Sudden severe headache
- Sudden numbness in face, arm, leg
- Sudden difficulty speaking, slurred speech

ACT F.A.S.T.

Act **F.A.S.T** if you think someone is experiencing a stroke:

- **F -Face:** Ask the person to smile. Does one side of the face droop?
- **A-Arms:** Ask the person to raise both arms. Does one arm drift downward?
- **S -Speech:** Ask the person to repeat a simple phrase. Is the speech slurred or strange?
- **T -Time:** If you see any of these signs, call 9-1-1 right away.

POTENTIAL POST-STROKE ISSUES

Potential physical challenges include:

- Paralysis in one or both sides of the body
- Numbness or strange sensations
- Difficulty chewing and swallowing
- Issues with bladder and bowel control

Potential communication problems include:

- Speech changes caused by muscle weakness
- Difficulty understanding or forming speech
- Attention, memory, and visual processing deficits

Potential emotional challenges may cause:

- Depressed mood and loss of interest in activities
- Increased appetite or loss of appetite
- Oversleeping or difficulty sleeping

REHABILITATION & PREVENTION

Patients can make great progress through stroke rehabilitation, which may include working with a health care team to relearn lost skills.

- Speech therapy helps patients produce or understand speech
- Occupational therapy helps patient with carrying out daily activities, including dressing, drinking, eating, and bathing
- Physical therapy helps patients regain movement and coordination skills that were lost

Patients who have had a stroke are more likely to have another. Treating the causes of stroke, such as heart disease, diabetes, high blood pressure, etc. is imperative to stroke prevention.