

What is a stroke?



A stroke is when the brain is damaged due to problems with blood flow inside the brain. There are two kinds of stroke:

1. **Ischemic stroke:** Blood flow to the brain is stopped for a period of time.
2. **Bleeding or hemorrhagic stroke:** An artery breaks open in the brain and starts to bleed.

What are the symptoms of a stroke?

Stroke symptoms vary depending on what part of the brain and how much of the brain is involved. Common symptoms include sudden onset of:



Weakness or numbness of an arm, leg, or part of the face



Visual changes in one or both eyes



Confusion



Dizziness



Trouble talking or understanding speech



Trouble with balance or walking

Note: A hemorrhagic stroke may also cause a severe headache, nausea, and vomiting.



BE FAST

It is important to get to the hospital as soon as stroke symptoms start.

A good way to remember symptoms and action is **BE FAST**:

- **Balance** — Difficulty walking or staying upright
- **Eyes** — Problems with vision
- **Face** — Drooping or looks uneven
- **Arm** — Weakness or numbness of an arm (or leg)
- **Speech** — Trouble talking or understanding speech
- **Time** — Time to call for an ambulance. You need to act fast. The sooner treatment begins, the better the chances of recovery.

How is a stroke diagnosed?

Typically, an imaging study of the brain such as a CT scan (which uses X-rays) or MRI (which uses magnets) helps confirm the diagnosis.



How is a stroke treated?

If an artery in the brain is blocked, treatment focuses on restoring blood flow. This can include procedures to directly treat the blocked artery or medications that dissolve blood clots.

If the stroke is caused by bleeding, treatment focuses on reducing damage to the brain. Medications to lower blood pressure and reduce the amount of bleeding may be prescribed. If a patient is taking blood thinners, they may need to stop taking them or change their dosage. Surgery or other procedures can treat the damaged artery and prevent more bleeding if needed.

What happens after a stroke?

Recovery from a stroke varies and depends on the size and location in the brain as well as how quickly it is treated. Some people may lose important brain functions such as speech, vision, and movement. Others may recover completely.

Speech, occupational, and physical therapy may be helpful after a stroke. Medications to help control blood pressure, decrease clotting, and lower cholesterol may be prescribed.





Can a stroke be prevented?

You can lower your risk of having a stroke by:

- Controlling blood pressure
- Treating high cholesterol levels
- Taking aspirin or other medications to decrease clotting risk, especially if you have been diagnosed with atrial fibrillation (A fib)
- Keeping blood sugar controlled if you have diabetes
- Avoiding tobacco and nicotine products
- Exercising regularly
- Eating a healthy diet that is high in fruits and vegetables while limiting salt, animal fat, and processed foods
- Limiting alcohol intake

Your doctor may also recommend a procedure to treat narrowed arteries in the neck. This can help lower the risk of having a stroke.

What is a TIA?

TIA stands for *transient ischemic attack*. Sometimes called a “mini-stroke,” a TIA occurs when blood flow in the brain is temporarily blocked. While symptoms may go away on their own, it is important to see a doctor right away. Without proper treatment, the risk of having a stroke after a TIA is very high.

If you are showing signs of a stroke, call 911 or go to the emergency room.

Call Healthmap Solutions at **1-800-481-0474 (TTY: 711)** to learn more about how you can lower your risk of having a stroke. Patients must meet program requirements to access Healthmap services.



1-800-481-0474 (TTY: 711) | healthmapsolutions.com/patient-resources