

Stroke

A stroke occurs when the blood flow to the brain is decreased or stopped. The blood flow can be blocked from a blood clot, plaque or a leak in a blood vessel. Sometimes the blood flow to the brain is blocked for a brief time. There will be signs of a stroke, but the signs go away in minutes to hours. This is called a **TIA or transient ischemic attack or “mini stroke”**. This is a strong warning that there is a problem and a stroke could occur in the future. When the blood flow to the brain is blocked causing permanent damage, it is called a stroke. Tests can be done to find the type, location and cause of the blockage to the blood flow of the brain.

Signs

The effects of a stroke depend on the location and amount of damage to the brain. Signs are sudden and may include:

- Numbness, tingling or weakness in the face, arm or leg, often only on one side of the body
- Confusion or trouble understanding
- Problems speaking
- Problems seeing out of one or both eyes
- Dizziness or trouble with balance, coordination or walking
- Sudden severe headache with no known cause

Your Care

Call 911 as soon as you have any signs of a stroke. The goal of care is to stop further damage to the brain. It is key to get to the hospital right away.

It often takes a few days to see what type of damage has occurred. It is hard to predict recovery from a stroke. Care is planned based on your needs. It may include:

- Therapy for rehabilitation
- Exercise to strengthen your muscles
- Adapting your activity to use the strong side of your body
- Learning how to talk and communicate
- Learning ways to eat and drink safely

Risk Factors

You are at risk for a stroke if you:

- Have high blood pressure, diabetes, high blood cholesterol, heart disease or a prior stroke
- Are from a family where others have had a stroke
- Are overweight
- Are inactive or do not exercise
- Have a lot of stress
- Eat foods high in cholesterol and fat
- Smoke or use tobacco
- Drink too much alcohol
- Use street drugs
- Have a head injury or a bleeding disorder

If you have any of these risk factors, talk to your doctor or nurse about ways to manage them.

To Prevent a Stroke

- Treat high blood pressure, diabetes, high cholesterol and heart disease if present
- Quit smoking
- Exercise
- Eat a healthy diet and lose weight if you are overweight
- Limit alcohol to 1-2 drinks a day
- Avoid falls and injuries

Talk to your doctor or nurse if you have any questions or concerns.