



Stroke

Your quick guide



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FOR EVERY
HEARTBEAT**
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Coronary heart disease is the UK's single biggest killer.

For over 50 years we've pioneered research that's transformed the lives of people living with heart and circulatory conditions. Our work has been central to the discoveries of vital treatments that are changing the fight against heart disease.

But so many people still need our help. From babies born with life-threatening heart problems to the many Mums, Dads and Grandparents who survive a heart attack and endure the daily battles of living with heart failure.

Join our fight for every heartbeat in the UK. Every pound raised, minute of your time and donation to our shops will help make a difference to people's lives.

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What is a stroke?

A stroke happens when blood suddenly can't get through to a part of your brain. If this happens, brain cells in the affected part of your brain begin to die because they're not getting the oxygen they need. That can affect the way your body and mind work.



What are the symptoms?

You can act **FAST** to recognise the symptoms of a stroke.

FACE

Facial weakness

Can the person smile?
Has their mouth or eye drooped?



ARMS

Arm weakness

Can the person raise both arms?



SPEECH

Speech problems

Can the person speak clearly?
Can they understand you?



TIME

Time to call 999



If you suspect someone may be having a stroke call 999 straight away.

The quicker they reach hospital, the quicker they can be treated. This can prevent further damage to their brain and reduce the chances of long-term disability and even death.

Damage to the right side of your brain can cause physical effects on the left side of your body.

Damage to the left side of your brain can cause physical effects on the right side of your body.

Finding it difficult to remember things

Finding it difficult to understand people

Finding it difficult to concentrate

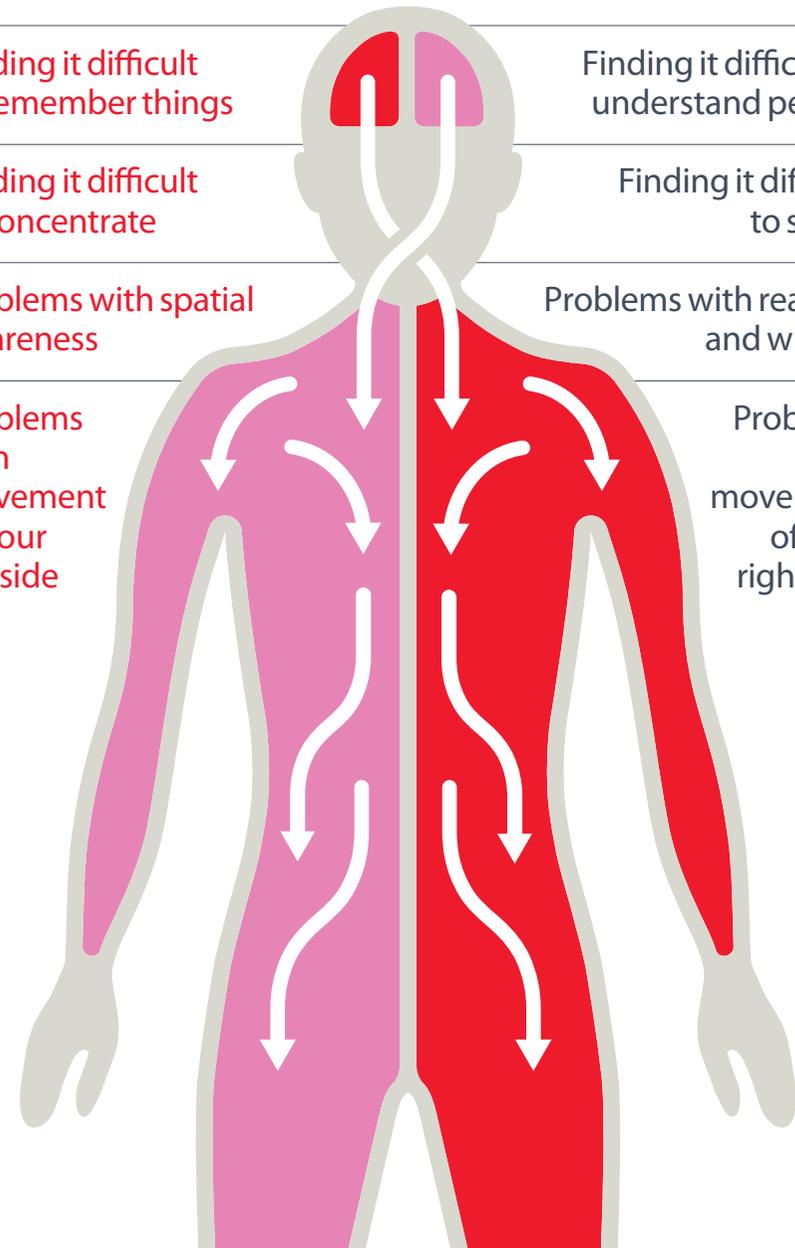
Finding it difficult to speak

Problems with spatial awareness

Problems with reading and writing

Problems with movement of your left side

Problems with movement of your right side



How could a stroke affect me?

A stroke can occur very suddenly and the symptoms can be severe. It can affect how your body works, how you think, how you feel, how you learn and how you communicate. But not all strokes are the same. The effects of a stroke depend on the area of your brain which has been affected, how severe the damage is and your health before the stroke. Although many people make a good recovery after a stroke, most people are left with some sort of long-term problem or disability.

Tiredness is a common effect of stroke. You might feel that you have no energy or strength to do things.



What tests will I need?

Usually within 24 hours of arriving at hospital you will have a CT scan (or MRI scan) of your brain.

If the doctor thinks you may have had a stroke you will need to have tests to help find out what type of stroke you had, why you had a stroke and what treatment you may need.

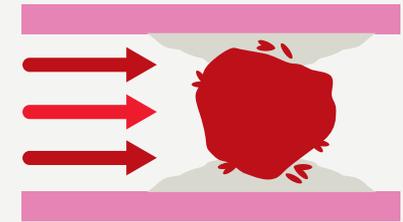


Are there different types of stroke?

Yes – the two most common types of stroke are ischaemic and haemorrhagic.

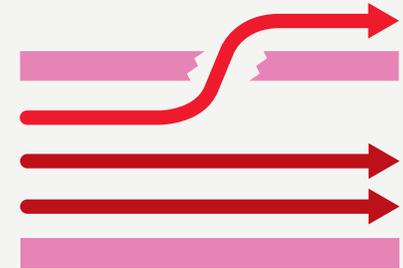
Ischaemic stroke

An ischaemic stroke happens when something blocks an artery which supplies your brain with blood, such as a blood clot.



Haemorrhagic stroke

A haemorrhagic stroke happens when a blood vessel in your brain, or on its surface, bursts and bleeds into your brain.



What is a mini-stroke?

Sometimes the symptoms of a stroke disappear within 24 hours. This is a mini-stroke – also called a transient ischaemic attack (or TIA) – and happens when there is a temporary blockage in the blood supply to your brain. A TIA can lead to a major stroke so if you think someone may have had a TIA or has any of the symptoms of a stroke call 999.



Everton's story

Everton had a stroke nearly ten years ago. His symptoms started while at work.

"I wasn't expecting something like this to happen.

We were in a meeting. I was talking and started to slur my words. All of a sudden the headache came.

I later collapsed at home.

When I woke up in hospital all my family were in the room. The doctors didn't think I was going to make it.

I was in hospital for six weeks.

I did suffer changes, struggling to remember things. But I willed myself to get better. I wasn't going to let it hold me back."





What does rehab involve?

A stroke affects different people in different ways.

You're likely to see the most improvement in the first few weeks of your recovery, usually while you are still in hospital. But it may take many months or even years.

Your rehabilitation will begin in hospital when a team of specialists, including nurses and physiotherapists, will discuss with you what help you need. The aim of rehabilitation is to help you live as independently as you did before you had a stroke.

“I had a different perspective on life. I started valuing things, especially myself.”

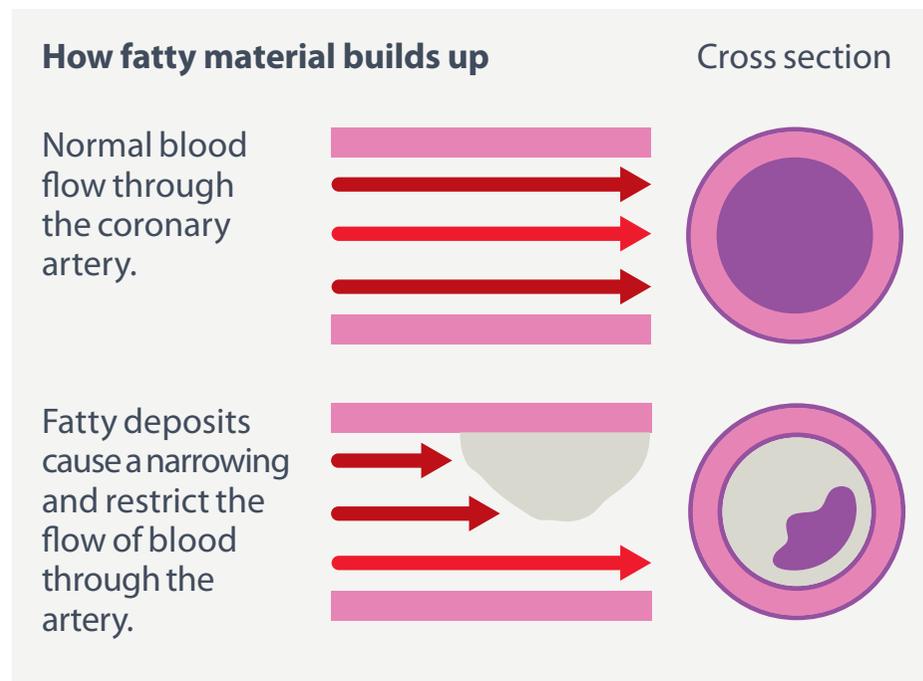
Everton, survivor



Is a stroke linked to heart disease?

Yes – some strokes and coronary heart disease (angina and heart attack) can be caused by the same problem – **atherosclerosis**. This is when your arteries become narrowed by a gradual build-up of fatty material in the artery walls. If the fatty material breaks down (or ruptures), a blood clot will form.

If a blood clot blocks one of the arteries that supply your heart with blood this is a heart attack.



This means that strokes and coronary heart disease share some of the same risk factors. A risk factor is something that increases your chances of getting a disease. So, for example you are more likely to have a stroke or develop coronary heart disease if you smoke or have high blood pressure.

Your risk of a stroke increases as you get older.

If you have **atrial fibrillation** (a common abnormal heart rhythm) your risk of a stroke is increased by five times. This is because atrial fibrillation makes it more likely that a blood clot will develop inside your heart – the blood clot may then travel through your blood to your brain and cause a stroke.

The heart's normal rhythm



In atrial fibrillation the top chambers of your heart quiver, which means the heart rhythm is often irregular and usually faster than normal, although it can also be slower than normal too.

Atrial fibrillation





Use this space to make notes for discussions with your doctor.

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Join us in the fight for every heartbeat.

For 50 years the British Heart Foundation has been funding life-saving heart research. Our work has been central to the discoveries of vital treatments that are changing the fight against heart disease. But we need your support to continue this fight.

Visit bhf.org.uk to make a donation or find out more.

For more information

You can find out more about the topics talked about here in some of our other resources:

Booklets

- Atrial fibrillation
- Stop smoking
- Blood pressure
- Reducing your blood cholesterol

Other resources

- Risking it (DVD)
- Know your heart (online tool)

For more information on stroke, visit the Stroke Association website stroke.org.uk

To order our booklets or DVDs:
call **0870 600 6566**
email orderline@bhf.org.uk
or visit bhf.org.uk/publications

Contact

For more information visit the British Heart Foundation website bhf.org.uk

Heart Helpline 0300 330 3311

(a similar cost to 01 and 02 numbers)
For information and support on anything heart-related.