

WHAT IS A STROKE?



A stroke occurs when a blood vessel that supplies blood to the brain bursts or is blocked by a blood clot. Within minutes, the nerve cells in that area of the brain become damaged and die, and as a result, the part of the body controlled by the damaged section of the brain cannot function properly.

STROKE CAUSES

Blockage of a blood vessel that supplies blood to the brain, the blockage may be a blood clot that forms inside the blood vessel (thrombus) or an object (such as an air bubble or piece of tissue) that moves through the blood from another part of the body (embolus).

Sudden bleeding from a blood vessel that supplies blood to the brain. This is most often caused by the rupture of a weakened area in a blood vessel (Aneurysm).

High blood pressure, can damage the delicate lining of blood vessels. Once damaged, fat and calcium can build up along the artery walls, forming a plaque. The blood vessel becomes narrowed and stiff (atherosclerosis), and blood flow is reduced.

Symptoms of a stroke appear suddenly and may include:

- Numbness, weakness, or a lack of movement (paralysis) in the face, arms, or legs. Usually appears on only one side of the body.
- Trouble with vision in one or both eyes.
- Confusion and difficulty speaking.
- Dizziness, loss of balance or co-ordination
- Vomiting.
- A sudden, severe headache.

The effects of a stroke can be either mild or severe, some are temporary others permanent, this depends on

which brain cells have been damaged, how much of the brain is involved, and how quickly the blood supply is restored to the area. A stroke can affect speech, movement, behaviour, and thought processes. When severe, it can cause paralysis, coma, and death. A person having symptoms of stroke needs immediate medical attention.

WHAT HAPPENS?

When you have an ischemic stroke the oxygen-rich blood supply to part of your brain is reduced. With a haemorrhagic stroke, there is bleeding in the brain.

After about 4 minutes without blood and oxygen, brain cells become more damaged and may die. The body tries to restore blood and oxygen to the cells by enlarging other blood vessels (arteries) near the area. If the blockage is in a large blood vessel, such as the carotid artery, the body may not be able to supply blood to the affected area through other blood vessels.

If blood supply is not restored, permanent brain damage usually occurs. An ischemic stroke develops when a blood vessel (artery) supplying blood to an area of the brain becomes blocked by a blood clot. About 80% of all strokes are Ischemic strokes.

A haemorrhagic stroke develops when an artery in the brain leaks or bursts (ruptures).

TREATMENT

Prompt treatment of stroke and reducing related medical problems, such as high blood sugar and blood pressure, may minimise brain damage and improve chances of survival. Starting a rehabilitation programme as soon as possible after a stroke increases your chances of recovering some of the abilities which you may have lost.

REMEMBER!!

If you think someone may be suffering from a stroke, act **F.A.S.T** and call for help!

Face – Has their face fallen on one side?

Arms – Can they raise both arms and keep them there?

Speech – Is their speech slurred?

Time – to call 999! If you see any single one of these signs.