



Factsheet

Stroke

A Stroke is a serious life-threatening condition. It is a medical emergency requiring urgent treatment to ensure the best possible outcome.

What is a stroke

The blood supply to the brain is delivered by a complex network of arteries and veins. This blood supply brings the brain oxygen and nutrients in order to function properly. A stroke occurs when the blood supply to a part of the brain is restricted or cut off causing the brain cells to die and leading to various degrees of brain injury, disability and sometimes even death.

There are two main types of stroke. The most common type is called an 'ischaemic' stroke and is caused when the blood supply to part of the brain is cut off as a result of a clot. A less common type is a 'haemorrhagic' stroke and is caused when a weakened blood vessel in the brain ruptures.

Some people may also suffer what is known as a transient ischaemic attack (TIA) or mini stroke when the interruption of the blood supply is temporary.

It may cause similar symptoms to a stroke which then resolve usually after a few minutes. A TIA is a warning sign that a stroke may occur so urgent medical treatment should still be sought so appropriate treatment can be provided to minimise the chance of a stroke occurring.

Who is at risk?

Strokes occur more commonly as a person ages but may also occur in young adults and children. There are certain conditions that increase the risk of having a stroke including the following:

- High blood pressure (hypertension)
- Diabetes
- High cholesterol
- Abnormal heart rhythm (atrial fibrillation)
- Smoking
- Increasing age

Stroke symptoms

The **FAST** test has been used for some time now and was introduced to educate the public on recognising the symptoms of a stroke with the aim of getting faster treatment which leads to the best outcome.

Face – Facial weakness on one side. The face may be drooping on one and the person may not be able to smile.

Arms – Weakness and inability to be able to raise both arms equally.

Speech – Slurred or odd speech or unable to talk at all. The person may also have difficulty understanding what is said to them.

Time – Time to call 999 immediately

Other symptoms may include the following:

- Difficulty swallowing
- Sudden blurred vision or loss of vision
- Loss of consciousness
- Incontinence
- Sudden dizziness, confusion, and issues with balance
- Impaired memory
- Fatigue
- Depression
- Difficulty controlling emotions

Diagnosis and Treatment

Prompt recognition of stroke symptoms and/or the underlying conditions that increase the risk of stroke is essential to ensuring that timely investigations and treatment are provided to help minimise the chance of a stroke occurring and to provide rapid treatment when a stroke does occur to ensure the best outcome.

Sometimes a stroke may be misdiagnosed or diagnosed late affecting the recovery. For instance, the symptoms of a stroke might be overlooked because they are mild or sometimes they are wrongly attributed to other conditions such as headaches or migraines. It is also important to recognise and treat the underlying conditions that increase one's risk of stroke such as

high blood pressure and other conditions as mentioned above. A failure to treat high blood pressure, for example may lead to an avoidable stroke.

The treatment for a stroke will depend on the type of stroke and the severity but the sooner a diagnosis is made and treatment started, the better the long-term prognosis is likely to be.

Medication is usually the first line of treatment and will include drugs to dissolve and prevent blood clots, to normalise high blood pressure and to reduce cholesterol levels. In more severe cases, procedures may be required to remove the blood clot, or surgery undertaken in the case of a haemorrhagic stroke to prevent further bleeding. Surgery may also be required to reduce brain swelling in the critical stages following a stroke.

People who survive stroke are often left with disability and will require a significant period of rehabilitation to help reach their potential in terms of living independently and returning to work.

Further information and support

Stroke affects people differently. Some people may recover fully or be left with only mild symptoms. Others may have varying degrees of disability. Some people will need help with everyday living and be unable to work.

However you are affected, the Stroke Association, www.stroke.org.uk can provide further information and support for people living with stroke.

Clinical negligence

Our NHS provides an outstanding service for the most part but sadly mistakes do happen. If you feel a mistake has been made leading to a delay in diagnosing and treating your stroke or the underlying conditions that may have prevented a stroke, you may be entitled to pursue a claim for compensation.

Moore Barlow has vast experience in dealing with stroke claims. We understand that bringing a case when you and your family are living with stroke is not an easy path to take but if you have concerns about your own treatment or that of a loved one please do call us for an initial discussion.

Contact us today
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