

Strokes affect the arteries leading to and within the brain. A stroke occurs when a blood vessel that carries oxygen and nutrients to the brain is either blocked by a clot or bursts/ruptures. When that happens, part of the brain cannot get the blood and oxygen it needs. This results in the death of that part of the brain and the brain cells.

**Source:** [http://www.strokeassociation.org/STROKEORG/AboutStroke/About-Stroke\\_UCM\\_308529\\_SubHomePage.jsp](http://www.strokeassociation.org/STROKEORG/AboutStroke/About-Stroke_UCM_308529_SubHomePage.jsp) (Accessed 8/10/16)

## Types of Strokes

**Ischemic stroke:** occur when the arteries to the brain become narrowed or blocked, causing severely reduced blood flow. This is known as ischemia. The most common ischemic strokes include:

- **Thrombotic stroke:** occurs when a blood clot (thrombus) forms in one of the arteries that supply blood to the brain. A clot may be caused by fatty deposits (plaque) that build up in arteries and cause reduced blood flow (atherosclerosis) or other artery conditions.
- **Embolic stroke:** occurs when a blood clot or other debris forms away from the brain — commonly in the heart — and is swept through your bloodstream to lodge in narrower brain arteries. This type of blood clot is called an embolus.

**Hemorrhagic stroke:** occurs when a blood vessel in the brain leaks or ruptures. Brain hemorrhages can result from many conditions that affect the blood vessels, including uncontrolled high blood pressure (hypertension), overtreatment with anticoagulants and weak spots in the blood vessel walls (aneurysms).

**Transient ischemic attack:** also known as a ministroke, this is a brief period of symptoms similar to those of a stroke. A temporary decrease in blood supply to part of the brain causes TIAs, which often last less than five minutes.

Like an ischemic stroke, a TIA occurs when a clot or debris blocks blood flow to part of the brain. A TIA doesn't leave lasting symptoms because the blockage is temporary. Having a TIA puts a person at greater risk of having a stroke, causing permanent damage later.

**Source:** <http://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/stroke/symptoms-causes/dxc-20117265> (Accessed 8/3/16)

## Symptoms of a Stroke

- Sudden weakness or numbness in the face, arm or leg on one side of the body.
- Abrupt loss of vision, strength, coordination, sensation, speech or the ability to understand speech. These symptoms may worsen over time.
- Sudden dimness of vision, especially in one eye.
- Sudden loss of balance, possibly accompanied by vomiting, nausea, fever, hiccups or trouble with swallowing.



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### Symptoms of a Stroke (cont.)

- Sudden and severe headache with no other cause followed rapidly by loss of consciousness.
- Brief loss of consciousness.
- Unexplained dizziness or sudden falls.

Source: <http://www.webmd.com/stroke/guide/understanding-stroke-symptoms> (Accessed 8/31/16)

If you recognize that the client is experiencing any symptoms, think “FAST” and do the following:

**Face:** ask the person to smile. Is one side of the face drooping?

**Arms:** ask the person to raise both arms. Is one arm drifting downward? Or is the client unable to raise one arm?

**Speech:** ask the client to repeat a simple phrase. Is the speech slurred or strange?

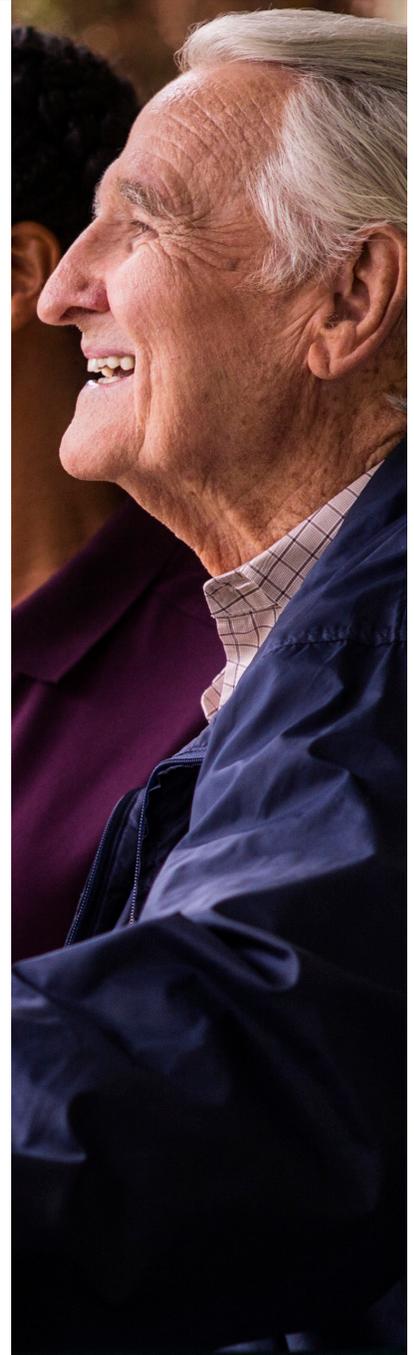
**Time:** If you observe any of these signs, call 911 immediately.

Source:

<http://www.stroke.org/understand-stroke/recognizing-stroke/act-fast> (Accessed 8/31/16)

### Complications of a Stroke

- **Paralysis or loss of muscle movement:** the client may become paralyzed on one side of her body, or lose control of certain muscles, such as those on one side of her face or one arm. Physical therapy may help the client return to activities hampered by paralysis, such as walking, eating and dressing.
- **Difficulty talking or swallowing:** a stroke may cause the client to have less control over the way the muscles in her mouth and throat move, making it difficult for her to talk clearly (dysarthria), swallow or eat (dysphagia). The client may have difficulty with language (aphasia), including speaking or understanding speech, reading or writing. Therapy with a speech and language pathologist may help.
- **Memory loss or thinking difficulties:** many people who have had strokes experience some memory loss. Others may have difficulty thinking, making judgments, reasoning and understanding concepts.
- **Emotional problems:** people who have had strokes may have more difficulty controlling their emotions or they may develop depression.
- **Pain:** people who have had strokes may experience pain, numbness or other strange sensations in parts of their bodies affected by stroke. For example, if a stroke causes the client to lose feeling in her left arm, she may develop an



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uncomfortable tingling sensation in that arm. People may also be sensitive to temperature changes, especially extreme cold after a stroke.

- **Changes in behavior and self-care ability:** people who have had strokes may become more withdrawn and less social or more impulsive. They may need help with grooming and daily chores.

Source: <http://www.webmd.com/stroke/guide/understanding-stroke-symptoms> (Accessed 8/3/16)

## Treatment for Strokes

If the client believes she is having a stroke or showing signs, call 911 immediately. Early treatment can prevent or limit damage to the heart muscle. Treatment can include:

- Medications
- Medical procedures, e.g., surgical blood vessel repair or treatment to dissolve dangerous clots (thrombolysis).
- Rehabilitation: a medically supervised program that may help improve the health and well-being of people who have had strokes.

## Role of a CAREGiver<sup>SM</sup>

- Follow the physician's recommendations for treatment and physical activity.
- Encourage the client to use walking aids, e.g., walkers or canes.
- Help to provide a safe environment. If possible, remove all throw rugs and keep floors and rooms clutter free. Check the house for loose handrails or grab bars. If you have modification recommendations, contact the franchise office.
- Encourage the client to get plenty of rest.
- Plan and prepare a well-balanced diet.
- Be patient. It may take longer to complete tasks.
- Plan appropriate activities. A person that has had a stroke may not be able to do the same activities as she did before the stroke.
- Monitor symptoms. Note if they improve or worsen.
- Assist the client with personal care, if needed.
- Help manage the effects of the stroke. For example, if the client has right-sided paralysis, she may need help with everyday tasks such as pouring a cup of coffee.
- Recognize, report and record. Be the eyes and ears for the client in the home. Report any changes or concerns to the franchise office as soon as possible.

**Seek immediate medical attention if you notice any signs or symptoms of a stroke, even if they seem to fluctuate or disappear.**

