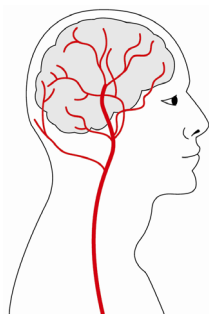


All about stroke: information for children (aged 9+)

A stroke is a health problem that affects the brain. The brain acts like an engine running the rest of the body, so a stroke can have lots of different effects. Here is some information about what happens when someone has a stroke and how they get better.

How does a stroke happen?

For all the different parts of our body to work properly, they need a good supply of blood. This blood carries the oxygen and nutrients that our bodies need to work. It is pumped around through tubes called blood vessels.



When someone has a stroke, it means something has stopped the normal blood supply to the brain. Most strokes happen because a blockage stops the blood flow to the brain. Sometimes, though, a stroke happens when a blood vessel bursts and causes bleeding in the brain. When blood doesn't reach parts of the brain, these parts become damaged and cannot work properly.

The brain controls everything we do, so when a stroke happens it can make it harder to do normal, everyday things like walking and

talking. Although a stroke can happen to anyone, it usually happens to older people.

Why do strokes happen?

Some people are more likely to have a stroke than others. This could be because they have medical problems like high blood pressure or heart problems.

Keeping healthy, for example not smoking, not drinking too much alcohol, eating lots of fruit and vegetables and doing some exercise, reduces the chances of someone having a stroke.

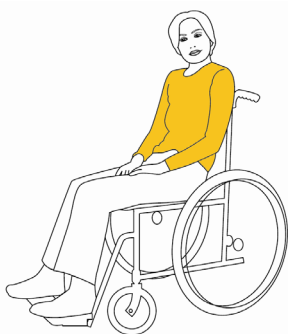
Sometimes people think that a stroke happens because the person had an accident or a nasty shock, or because they were upset about something like an argument. These things don't cause strokes. It's never anyone's fault when someone has a stroke.

What effects can a stroke have?

The brain controls everything that our bodies do by sending messages to its different parts. For example, it sends messages to our

All about stroke: information for children

arms and legs telling them to move when we want them to. After a stroke, the brain can stop sending these messages to parts of the body. This often means that people who have had a stroke can't walk or move in the way they did before. They may need to use a wheelchair or a stick to help them walk, or they may not be able to use one of their arms as well as they used to.



A stroke can make ordinary things like talking, reading and writing more difficult. Sometimes it makes it harder for the person to understand what other people are saying to them. They may even say words that don't make sense. It doesn't mean they are being silly or stupid – it just means that the part of their brain that controls speaking and understanding isn't working properly.

Sometimes people who have had a stroke forget things you've just told them, or the things they always used to remember. They may not remember where they have put things like their glasses. Or they might forget someone's name or what they did yesterday.



There are lots of other effects that a stroke can have. Some people may have trouble seeing things properly. Others may not be able to eat or drink properly and may need to be given food through a tube into their stomach.

People who have had a stroke usually feel very tired and want to sleep a lot. They may not want to talk to other people or have too many visitors. This is because their body needs to rest to help them get better. Sometimes it can help if there are only a few visitors and they don't stay too long.

Some people who have had a stroke become very emotional. They may cry because they feel sad about things and sometimes they cry because they just can't help it. Sometimes they can laugh when you don't expect them to or when you don't think they should. They have these feelings because of how the stroke has affected their brain. These changes often get better in time.

It's normal for people who have had a stroke to feel frustrated and upset, especially if they can't speak properly or need to learn to do things again, like getting dressed.

Sometimes it is hard for other people to understand all the effects a stroke can have. The person who has had a stroke may not look different from before. If you break your leg, you may get a lot of sympathy because other people can see what has happened to you. You can't always see the ways a stroke can affect someone and because of this, people who haven't learned about stroke may say the wrong thing. That's because no-one has told them about how the brain is in charge of everything we do – such as how we move, speak and express our feelings.

Where do people go for treatment after a stroke?

Everyone who has a stroke should go to hospital for treatment.



The doctors will run lots of tests to find out what caused the stroke. They will probably have a test called a brain scan. This takes a picture of the brain, and helps the doctors see what has happened and how big the stroke was.

Most people will need to take some medicine after a stroke, and a few people will need an operation.

Most people need help from lots of different professionals in hospital to get better. This is called rehabilitation and it is how people relearn how to do things like walking, talking and writing.

Here are some of the people you may meet in hospital:

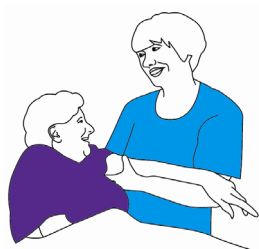
Doctors are in charge of someone's medical care in hospital.

Nurses are the main carers in hospital. They make sure everyone is safe and comfortable. Nurses can help people to get out of bed and to eat and drink at mealtimes.

Physiotherapists help people who have problems standing up or walking, or who have problems using their hands and arms.

Occupational therapists help people to do everyday things like getting dressed.

Speech therapists help people who have difficulty speaking, reading, writing or swallowing.



Even when the person who has had a stroke comes home from hospital they might have to keep seeing their doctor or other professionals. Many people do get better, but they may not be able to do everything they did before the stroke.

How do people get better?

When someone has a stroke, the family always asks the doctors and nurses at the hospital what they think is going to happen. Even the doctors can't always tell you how long it is going to take for someone to get better. But our brains are very clever, as well as very complicated, and can sometimes relearn the things they used to do. A lot of people do get much better, bit by bit.

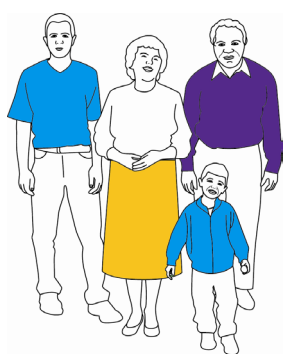
Every person who has a stroke gets better in a different way and in a different amount of time. Some people learn to do some things again but don't get completely better. They may have to use a wheelchair or walking stick or may have difficulty speaking.

You might feel sad, frustrated, or angry that this happened to someone you love, especially if they are not able to do the things they did with you before. Many people do get

better after a stroke, but it can take a long time so it is important to be patient.

If you have any questions or worries about someone who has had a stroke, tell someone about it. This could be your mum or dad, someone else in your family or a teacher. They can help to answer your questions.

Although the person who has had a stroke hasn't become a different person, they sometimes behave a little bit differently because of it. Remember that they are still the same person underneath. They still love the people they loved before and enjoy doing the things they did before. And whatever they can and cannot do, we still love them.



Further reading

Grandpa's Crooked Smile: A Story of Stroke Survival

Barbara Reeves, Peter Sinclair

2007, Aardvark Global Publishing

This online book explains what a stroke is and the changes that can happen to relationships when a member of the family has a stroke. It is available to read online: <http://bit.ly/UVnhyY>

Grandpa's Had A Stroke

Helen MacIntosh

2005, Self-published

This is an illustrated book that explains what a stroke is and what might happen when someone has a stroke. It will soon be available as an ebook. You can see a preview at: www.members.optusnet.com.au/hmcintosh/ghas.htm

Hands up for Andie

Brenda Palmer

HemiHelp

This is a story about a girl with hemiplegia and the difficulties this can cause.

It is available to purchase from HemiHelp: www.hemihelp.org.uk/support_us/shop/hands_up_for_andie

Tel: 0845 123 2372

Kids Health

Website: <http://kidshealth.org/kid/grownup/conditions/stroke.html>

They provide information you can read or listen to about a range of different health problems, including stroke.

Love After a Stroke

Megan C. Nosol

Paperback

This book is about a boy whose grandmother has a stroke and is left with aphasia. It explores the difficulties that a lack of communication can bring, and the ways to deal with these. You can see a preview online at: www.loveafterastroke.com/index.html.

My Grandpa Had a Stroke

Dori Hillestad Butler

Paperback, 2007, American Psychological Association

This is an illustrated storybook that covers topics such as what a stroke is, how it can affect someone, recovery and emotions.

You can see a preview at:

www.apa.org/pubs/magination/441A806.aspx

My Parent Has a Brain Injury

Jo Johnson

2011, RWP Group

Aimed at young children, this book provides information about brain injury. It also addresses the range of feelings that a child may be experiencing. It is available to purchase from Headway:
www.headway.org.uk/shop/my-parent-has-a-brain-injury.aspx

Now One Foot, Now the Other

Tomie dePaola

Paperback, 2006, Puffin

This is an illustrated story about a boy who helps his grandfather to relearn many activities after his stroke, such as walking.

What Are You Thinking of, Dad?

Nick Wisby

Paperback, 2011, Matador

Nick was 15 when his father had a stroke and lost the ability to communicate. He tells the story of his experience of living with this situation and how it changed his family.

When a parent has a brain injury: Sons and daughters speak out

Marilyn Lash

1993, DIANE Publishing

This is written from the perspective of the child, but it is aimed at older children. It covers many different aspects of stroke from being in hospital to life at home, friends and moving on.

When Grandpa Comes Home

The Stroke Center (a US organisation)

This is an interactive online story written from the perspective of a young girl whose grandpa comes to live with her family after a stroke. This book has pictures and audio available. It is available to read online at:
www.strokecenter.org/patients/caregiver-and-patient-resources/when-grandpa-comes-home

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