

# 10 COMMON QUESTIONS ASKED ABOUT STROKE

## **What is a stroke?**

A stroke happens when the blood supply to part of the brain is interrupted. As a result brain cells can be deprived of the oxygen and nutrients which they need. Some brain cells can become damaged and others can die. This can either be caused by a blood clot (ischaemic stroke) or burst blood vessel (haemorrhagic stroke).

## **Are there any warning signs before a stroke happens?**

For most people, stroke happens suddenly, without warning. However sometimes people do experience symptoms such as dizziness and loss of balance, loss of or changes to vision, weakness of the face, arm or leg, confusion, slurred speech and difficulty understanding. If you experience any of these symptoms even for just a small amount of time, you should seek medical attention immediately.

## **Am I more likely to have a stroke as I get older?**

Yes, stroke becomes more common as we get older. As we age our blood vessels become less elastic, which may increase the chance of high blood pressure developing so increasing the risk of stroke. You can reduce your risk of stroke by paying attention to risk factors such as high blood pressure, smoking, exercise, diet and alcohol intake.

## **Are strokes caused by high blood pressure?**

High blood pressure is the number one risk factor for stroke. High blood pressure over a period of time can cause damage to the blood vessels. Blood pressure should be checked every five years and if ever found to be abnormal it should be checked once a year. If you are concerned about blood pressure you should see your GP.

## **Is it normal to feel so exhausted after stroke?**

Exhaustion is a common feeling after a stroke. You can help by pacing yourself, taking a rest when you need to and increasing your level of activity slowly to build up strength and stamina. Energy levels will generally improve over time. However, some people do still experience fatigue for a long time after a stroke.

## **Will I get better?**

Because every stroke is different, everyone recovers at a different pace so it is difficult to say how well or how quickly you might recover. Most recovery occurs within the first six months after a stroke although some people continue to improve for years after. While some people make a full recovery and return to normal life, other people will be left with some level of disability. This depends on the severity of the stroke and other factors such as your age, general health and level of ability before the stroke.

FACTSHEET

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### **Will I have another stroke?**

Once you have had one stroke your risk of having another is increased but there are things you can do to help reduce your risk of having another one.

### **What can I do to reduce my risk of having another stroke?**

There are factors that increase your chance of having a stroke like age, ethnicity and family history that you can't change but there are also certain lifestyle factors that you can change that will help reduce your risk. These include stopping smoking, eating a healthy and varied diet, maintaining a healthy weight, keeping physically active and keeping your alcohol intake within recommended limits.

### **Does stroke run in families?**

If you have a close relative who has had a stroke, you are at an increased risk, however stroke is not hereditary. If you are concerned about stroke in your family, discuss your worries with your doctor.

### **Will I get back to work?**

This will depend on your recovery following a stroke. Many people do make a success of returning to work after a stroke. Some people return to their job as before or decide to work reduced hours. Others take the opportunity to try something else - perhaps work from home or take up a new challenge by retraining.

### **How can Chest Heart & Stroke Scotland help?**

Chest Heart & Stroke Scotland aims to improve the quality of life for people in Scotland affected by stroke illness through:

- Medical research and education
- Advice and health information
  - Call the Advice Line Nurses for confidential independent advice on 0808 801 0899 (free from landlines and mobiles).
  - Our health information team provides information about stroke in a variety of formats including aphasia friendly information, booklets and factsheets and our health information pages on the CHSS website ([www.chss.org.uk](http://www.chss.org.uk))
- Communication Support Service, Community Stroke Groups, Stroke Nurse Services.
- Personal Support Grants to individuals and families in financial hardship.

Find out more about all of our services by calling our Advice Line Nurses on 0808 801 0899 or by visiting our website [www.chss.org.uk](http://www.chss.org.uk)

If you would like to speak to one of our nurses in confidence,  
please call the Chest Heart & Stroke Scotland Advice Line Nurses

**0808 801 0899**

Call FREE from landlines and mobiles