

All about stroke: information for children

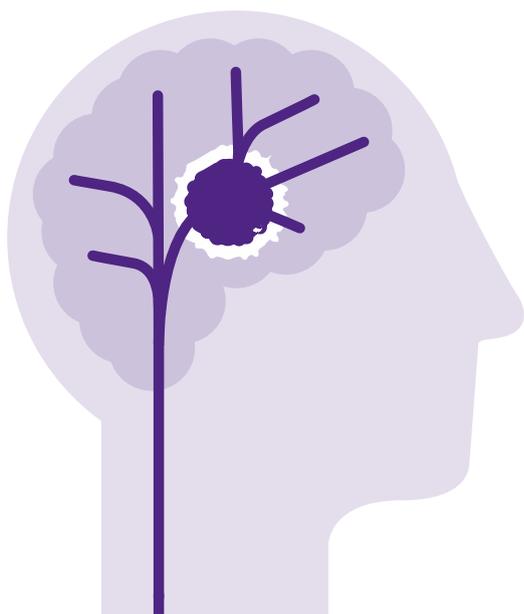
If you know someone who has had a stroke, this guide can help you understand what happened.

Tip for children

If you have any questions, you can ask a parent or carer, or a doctor or nurse.

A stroke happens in the brain

A stroke is when blood stops going to part of the brain. When that happens, part of the brain stops working. It can make someone very ill, but many people do get better.



Who can have a stroke?

Most strokes (about 3/4) happen to older people, like grandparents. But a quarter (1/4) of strokes happen to younger people, like parents, cousins and friends. Children can also have a stroke.

Does a stroke make people very ill?

Some people get better very quickly, and they might not even have to stay in hospital. Others have to stay in hospital while they get better. Some people can be ill for a long time. Doctors and nurses take care of them until they are well enough to leave hospital.

Tip for parents and carers

This guide can help you answer a child's questions. Children who can read may want to read it by themselves, or they might like you to read with them.

What if someone doesn't get better?

Stroke can be very serious, and people sometimes do die from a stroke. If you know someone who has died, it's natural to feel very upset and sad. You might feel angry about losing someone you love.

How you feel about it

A stroke is very sudden. If a stroke has happened to a friend or family member, you might feel shocked and upset. You might feel helpless because you can't make them better.

If you are feeling upset or worried about someone, try talking to a grown-up you trust. Your parents, carers and teachers can listen to your feelings, and try to answer your questions.

Problems after a stroke

What does your brain do?

Your brain is inside your head. It is where your thoughts and feelings happen. Your brain also has the job of controlling your body.

The brain controls everything you do, like seeing, hearing, talking and walking. Even things you don't think about, like breathing and your heart beating, are controlled by the brain.

Why does a stroke make someone ill?

A stroke is when part of the brain suddenly stops working. This can cause many different problems in your body.

After a stroke, a person might not be able to move one arm, or they might not be able to walk.

Some people find it hard to eat and drink. Some people can't understand what you say, or they can't talk very well.



Getting better

In a stroke, part of the brain stops working. But the brain often starts working again after a few days, and the person with the stroke might feel much better.

Sometimes part of the brain stops working for ever. If this happens, another part sometimes takes over, and the person can slowly get better.

Everyone gets better in their own way, and it can take a short time or a very long time.



Who helps them get better?

People get help from doctors, nurses and therapists.

Most people have therapy after a stroke, which often means practising exercises.

There are many different types of therapy. If someone has trouble with walking, they can have physiotherapy. If someone has trouble speaking or eating, they can have speech and language therapy to help them use their mouth better.

Therapy can help someone learn to do things again. If someone can't do everyday things like getting dressed, they can get therapy to help learn how to do it in a different way.

Why do strokes happen?

You can't tell when a stroke is going to happen. Sometimes there is no obvious reason for a stroke, but doctors can often find out why it happened. There are some illnesses that make people more likely to have a stroke, and older people are more likely to have a stroke.

Will they have another stroke?

Strokes can happen again. But doctors can give the person medicine to stop another stroke happening.

There are also some things that the person can try to keep from having another stroke.

1. Take medicine

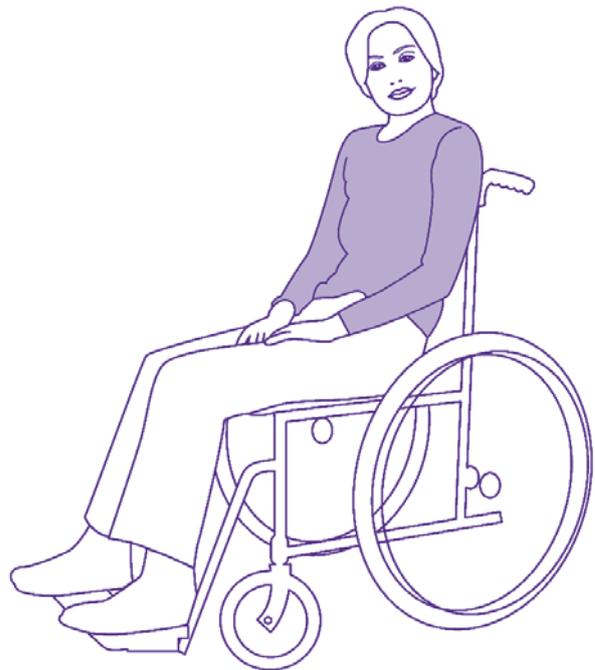
The person might need to take medicine if they have a health problem. This could be a problem with their heart, a problem with the way blood moves around the body, or they might have too much sugar in their blood.

2. Be healthy and active

A grown-up who smokes needs to give up smoking. If a grown-up drinks too much alcohol, they can drink less. There are some things everyone can do:

- eating healthy food, like vegetables and fruit
- doing active things, like walking, swimming and gardening
- if someone weighs too much, losing weight can help them stay healthy.

If a family member wants to be more active and eat healthy food, other people in the family can join in to help them.



Life after a stroke

A stroke is different for everybody. Some people get better very quickly.

Other people might look as though they are better, but they might feel very tired for a long time. They could feel sad or worried.

Some people might have a disability, such as finding it hard to walk. They might need to use a walking frame or a wheelchair. They might need to have some changes made in their house to help them do things more easily. This could mean making a doorway wider so a wheelchair to go through, or having a rail to hold onto when they walk down the front path.

Other people will need a lot of help with doing things. They might need someone to look after them, or they might even have to live somewhere that nurses and carers can take care of them.



What if they seem different?

A stroke can make someone seem a bit different to how they were before, but they are still the same person.

They might feel very tired and not have much energy for talking.

A stroke can make it hard for someone to speak, but they might like you to talk to them anyway.

A stroke can mean you can't see properly, so you might have to tell them you are there.

Because feelings come from your brain, a stroke can change someone's feelings. They might cry a lot. Some people act differently, like being angry a lot, or saying rude things. They might not like the same books or food they used to enjoy.

A stroke can also make people forget words, and sometimes they don't recognise things, or even people.

Things like this often get much better in a few weeks. Some changes last a long time. If you are worried about someone or want some help, you can tell a grown-up like a doctor, a parent or teacher.

Stroke emergency: what happens?

When someone gets ill from a stroke, they go straight to hospital. They usually go in an ambulance.

There are different types of stroke. Doctors use a scan to find out the type of stroke. A scan shows a picture of inside the brain, and it can show where a stroke has happened.

Doctors try to get blood going back into the brain. Sometimes they give an injection, and sometimes they do an operation.

They also try to find out why it happened. Sometimes they can't find out, but most of the time they know what the problem was.

To find out why a stroke happened, they do blood tests, measure blood pressure, and check if the heart works properly. If something is wrong, they often give medicine. This can help stop another stroke happening.

Brain facts

- Your brain is soft and squishy. It's protected by being inside your head, which is made of bone.
- Your brain is made up of tiny parts called brain cells. You have about 86 billion cells in your brain.
- Brains are hungry! Your brain uses a lot of energy, which comes from the food you eat.

Where to get help and information

From the Stroke Association

Talk to us

Our Stroke Helpline is for anyone affected by a stroke, including family, friends and carers. The Helpline can give you information and support on any aspect of stroke.

Call us on **0303 3033 100**, from a textphone **18001 0303 3033 100** or email **info@stroke.org.uk**.

Read our publications

We publish detailed information about a wide range of stroke topics including reducing your risk of a stroke and rehabilitation. Read online at **stroke.org.uk** or call the Helpline to ask for printed copies.

Books and websites for children

Chest, Heart & Stroke Scotland Website:

www.chss.org.uk/publications

Tel: 01908 317 618

Email: publications@chss.org.uk

Produces a book for young children called *When my Mum was ill* (Dad, Grandad and Gran versions are also available). A comic book version is available. (Mum and Dad versions available). Also publishes a magazine article called *Jo's story* for older children.

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 at bit.ly/UVnhyY.

Grandpa's had a Stroke

Helen MacIntosh
2005, *self-published*
This is an illustrated eBook that explains what a stroke is and what might happen when someone has a stroke. It is available from Google Play Books and Amazon.

Kids Health

Website: www.kidshealth.org/kids
Provides information you can read or listen to about a range of different health problems, including stroke.

Love After a Stroke

Megan C. Nosol
A book 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 view the whole book as a YouTube video at www.loveafterastroke.com

My Grandpa Had a Stroke

Dori Hillestad Butler
2007, *American Psychological Association*
This illustrated storybook covers topics such as what a stroke is, how it can affect someone, recovery and emotions.

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 at shop.headway.org.uk.

Now One Foot, Now the Other

Tomie dePaola
2006, *Puffin*
This is an illustrated story about a boy who helps his grandfather to relearn many activities after his stroke, such as walking.

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

Marilyn Lash
1993, *DIANE Publishing*
This is written from the view 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

This is an interactive online story written from the view 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/caregiver

Your Fantastic Elastic Brain: Stretch It, Shape It

JoAnn Deak

2010, *Little Pickle Press*

An illustrated book that explains what the brain does in a fun and engaging way.

About our information

We want to provide the best information for people affected by stroke. That's why we ask stroke survivors and their families, as well as medical experts, to help us put our publications together.

How did we do?

To tell us what you think of this guide, or to request a list of the sources we used to create it, email us at feedback@stroke.org.uk.

Accessible formats

Visit our website if you need this information in audio, large print or braille.

Always get individual advice

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